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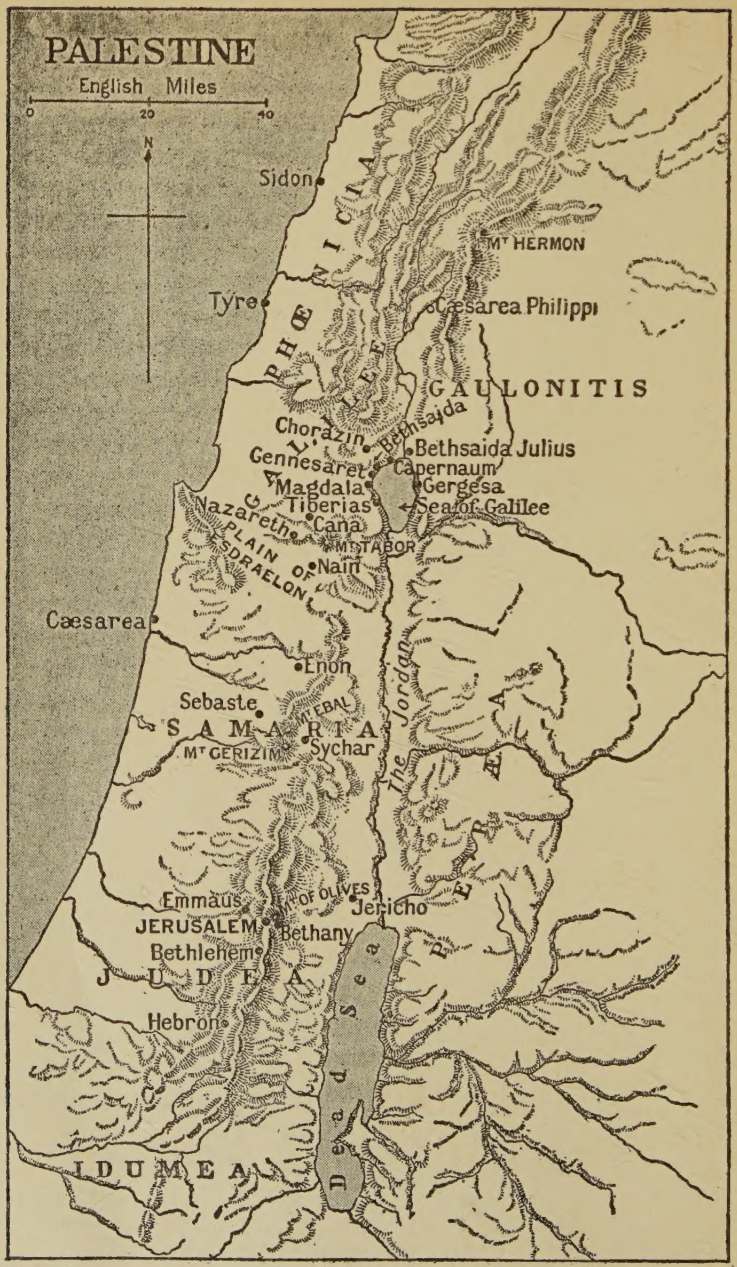
THE MASTER LIFE

W. P. LIVINGSTONE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THE MASTER LIFE

THE STORY OF JESUS FOR TO-DAY

L.7?

BY

W. P. LIVINGSTONE

AUTHOR OF "A GALILEE DOCTOR," "MARY SLESSOR OF CALABAR," ETC.

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THE REASON FOR THE BOOK

Exact knowledge of Jesus and His teaching is uncommon even amongst those who are His followers. A smattering of traditional information is usually given about Him in youth, but afterwards He becomes enveloped in a kind of golden haze which obscures rather than illumines His personality.

The picture still too often presented of Him is that of a sad and emaciated figure, meek, gentle-spoken, lamb-like, treading a grey and stony way, accompanied by a group of middle-aged men and drooping women, talking mysteriously of a mystical kingdom, and suffering at last, willingly yet shrinkingly, a shameful death in atonement for the sins of the world. It is a conception fitted less to inspire and help than to draw out wonder and pity, and it does not appeal to the modern spirit.

The meagreness of those iridescent fragments, the primitive records which report His words and acts, and their contradictory character, have made it difficult to exhibit Him and His message with the fulness and accuracy the mind and heart desire. Much, however, has been done of recent years to clarify the data. Critical yet reverent minds, working with patient deliberation and thoroughness, and examining every word and letter with microscopic minuteness, have sought to discover the ultimate residuum of truth in the various readings and conflicting accounts, and as a result of their labours has come a better comprehension of the order and meaning of the essential narrative—this,

though some of the investigators, devoid of imagination and the historic sense, have contributed as much as the unintelligent devotion of the literalists to dim the splendour of the living figure.

In these days, as often before, a tired and perplexed humanity is turning from organised forms of religion and examining with a fresh and independent interest the claim that Jesus is the spiritual hope of the world. No one who has any knowledge of the life of the people can fail to be impressed by the need for a clear-cut presentation of His life and aims dissociated from the professional ideas and phraseology that have ruled in the past. Truth is progressive, and if Jesus is for all time His teaching is bound to harmonise with the revelation and thought of each age; this, indeed, will always be the test of His reality.

The present book is a contribution towards meeting the need. Written from the standpoint of the time in which He lived—which is the only possible way to recover the actual atmosphere, and to appreciate what He was and the significance of His teaching—it seeks to make the real Jesus live anew before the eyes of old and young, and to portray in some sort of intelligible manner the unbroken sequence of His career, though one does not suppose that this, or any, harmony reproduces the original order of events.

The picture is of one in whom there was no drab or effeminate feature; whose life rather was aflame with beauty and colour, and dynamic with energy and intellectual power; who bore Himself with incomparable distinction and authority and drew to Him the young and virile, and all that was buoyant and robust and noble in human nature; who established no religion and formulated no scheme of salvation, but waged with practical purpose and utter fearlessness a revolutionary

campaign against age-long conservative evils in the cause of simplicity, purity, freedom, progress and brotherhood; who faced alone with unshakable courage that most formidable and implacable of all mobs, a priesthood alarmed for the integrity of its order and the security of its privileges; and who only gave up when His mission was accomplished and His fate unescapable.

A certain imaginative element is interwoven with the ordinary material. This is based on a legitimate process of inference and deduction carefully employed, on the same principle that an artist paints a portrait from some suggestive pencil lines or a naturalist reconstructs a complete organism from imperfect data. Jesus lived a natural life in normal surroundings and among ordinary people, and something like what is indicated must be true to the facts if He existed at all. Nothing, it is believed, is stated that is inconsistent with His nature or the spirit and circumstances of the age. It is a method which will justify itself if it enables a human soul here and there to love and understand Him better, and to follow with surer vision the incidents of His life-story—that very much misunderstood episode, the most picturesque and dramatic, the most entrancing, the most terrible, in the world.

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THE MASTER LIFE

THE MASTER LIFE

I: WHAT WENT BEFORE

The story of Jesus has its beginning much further back than the time in which He lived. It cannot be rightly understood unless one has some knowledge of the ceaseless quest of the human soul for the solution of the mystery of life, the manner in which light came throughout the ages, and the failure of men to live in harmony with the truth revealed to them. Only against this sombre background can the Figure of Jesus stand out in its true relation to humanity.

WHEN THE WORLD WAS YOUNG

No sooner had men climbed out of the abysmal depths and become conscious beings than they began to react to the mystery of the universe; to be affected by the phenomena around them and by the unknown forces behind these. Why, they did not know; they only knew that there existed darkness and light, warmth and cold, strife and peace. Life seemed to have no intelligent or beneficent purpose; it caressed them with beauty or calm, or stormed at them in gusts of savagery, cast their lives in pleasant places or tossed them hither and thither like the drift of the desert sand. What was certain was that within their bodies existed a strange invisible nature, and that outside of themselves, and beyond what they could see, was an-

other immaterial world to which they seemed to have some relation, which was clearly superior to them, and to which, for some inscrutable reason, they were compelled to adjust themselves.

They had no means of knowing how to conform to the requirements of this super-physical region, and their early attempts merely reflected what they themselves thought and imagined. It appeared to be peopled by spirit-beings with motives and passions similar to their own and who were hostile to their well-being. The belief bred fear, and fear, in an age when force alone ruled, brought them to their knees in abject obeisance with gifts to appease their wrath and propitiate their favour. Naturally it was the best they could give that was offered, the first-born of their flocks, the first-fruits of the ground, even their own first offspring.

Out of this attitude developed a crude religionism which came to be controlled by a class who had an aptitude for the task, the first of the long line of professional priests of the Unknown, who, from time to time, reduced man's speculations and beliefs to systems and elaborated corresponding rituals of worship and sacrifice. When a feeling grew that there was something apart from caprice governing the world, a sense that, after all, some quality of justice and mercy interpenetrated existence, the theory developed that there were two opposing sets of powers at work, each balancing the activities of the other, good and evil principles struggling for supremacy, but with an underlying belief that the good predominated. Fear remained, but reverence was added, and with reverence came worship of a higher type but still accompanied by sacrifice, the victims being regarded as vicarious offerings atoning for human failure, averting the penalty, and re-establishing right relations with the unseen powers.

The two great conflicts went on, men fighting amongst themselves, individual with individual, tribe with tribe, nation with nation, bringing to most the strain of striving and the bitterness of defeat; and man fighting with himself, with the mysterious forces of his body, that challenging enigma, that engine of potentialities, with its impulses and appetites which seemed natural and yet somehow in their gratification created dissatisfaction and dispeace.

Out of the darkness came gleams of light. It was felt that there existed some sort of ultimate good; and the condition brought about by the lack of correspondence with this ideal, the failure to harmonise conduct with what was the standard at each stage of development, was regarded as "sin." It was also believed that there must be a way of restoring the balance when it was lost, some method of attaining a feeling of equipoise and peace, and the search for it never ceased.

Schemes of salvation from sin were thought out and embraced by multitudes, only to produce formalism and privileged castes, followed by reaction and reform until the world was full of different types of religion ranging from simple codes of conduct to philosophical and mystical systems, and affording their votaries a wide latitude of action from severe asceticism to sensual excess. Few were without value, since they contributed to social unity and order, but all left men and women a prey to the confusion and harshness of life and the victims of wayward impulse.

The mistake made by the directing minds, so often wooden and unimaginative, was in supposing that the revelation of truth, coming as an unfolding illumination to men, had to be systematised and embodied in concrete form lest it should vanish. They conceived

that the soul was a more or less stable mechanism which could be coerced and inhibited, instead of a wild free thing, inexplicable and elusive, which could not be imprisoned and dealt with on institutional and official lines. Whenever it broke away from authority into the light and air it was caught and dragged back to the fixed routine of creed and ritual. Whenever, craving for sympathy, it sought for a Living Touch, it was given a System; when it appealed for a personal Helping Hand, it was presented with a Philosophy of Life. And because it hungered for a visible Form it would kneel, in a passion of longing and sorrow and penitence, before images of wood or marble, since, whether these were daubed with the dyes of the forest or ablaze with jewels, they symbolised to it in some appreciable way an Understanding Individuality behind the mysterious pageant of life.

OUT OF THE DESERT

While men everywhere were brooding over the supreme problem there was roaming over the desert steppes of Arabia a band of nomad Semites, who were reaching forward to truer conceptions than nations in the settled regions of the earth. Originally they entertained the same ideas as others: they had been associated with the culture of Asia; they had learned something of morality and social justice from Egypt; but in the desert they came nearer the heart of things. This was not strange. There was no sphere where a sense of the Unseen was so pervading. The immensity of the empty spaces, broken at rare intervals by solitary mountain-ranges wreathed in mist; the endless stretches of yellow sand and wind-blown mounts, hot and quivering with haze and mirage by day, and by night cold and

serene and so vacant that one seemed to stand in the centre of a universe of planets and stars; by day and night the intense silence and loneliness; the absence of artificial objects—these, along with their restless movements, their long marches, their brief stoppages at pasture grounds which gave them little opportunity for elaborating nature myths or idol worship, brought them into close contact with the vast unity of existence and prepared their minds for the idea of a single overruling Power.

But without the genius of their leader they might have achieved nothing. Moses, their sheikh, it was who led them from the thought of a local deity throned among thunder clouds to an Unseen Presence unrestricted to a particular spot, a righteous god who required them to do righteously; and who gave them a movable sanctuary for his dwelling. When, in the course of their wanderings, they reached the eastern heights of the Jordan they had formally adopted this Presence, Yahweh, as their sole god, the god of their own tribes, their patron in war and protector in peace. Although in his attributes made after the pictures in their minds, he was the highest ideal which had as yet been formulated.

Out of the desert had come a faint outline of the one Infinite Spirit, the Personality of Good, who ruled the universe. . . .

One late afternoon Moses emerged from his tent of woven goat's-hair and slowly climbed a headland which overlooked the country to the west. Erect and vigorous despite his years, he possessed the air of authority which characterises a leader of men; his face, though deeply lined, was clean-cut and strong, and the light in his eyes was bright and keen.

Reaching the brow of the hill he seated himself on a

boulder amongst tall flowers thick with bees, and, with thoughtful gaze, surveyed the wide prospect, every detail of which was vividly clear in the lucent atmosphere. From the far south where white mists were rising to the far north, where a snow-crowned mountain rose dim against the blue, stretched an immense canyon with precipitous flanks and a broad and level bed which looked arid and bare, save for a sinuous ribbon of jungle and brushwood where the Jordan ran. Immediately below his position the river expanded into a salt lake, already shining in the half-lights of evening. The slopes opposite seemed blanched and desolate, but splashes of colour showed where the flowers and weeds grew in mass; there, too, the bees would be rifling the blossoms. Slow-moving shapes like shadows were, he knew, flocks of goats and sheep feeding on the scanty herbage, and a dark thread twisting down the rocky paths cattle being driven home to a city at the foothills half-hidden by sand-dunes and palm trees. Further north uprising clouds indicated to his experienced eye a train of camels padding along a dusty roadway. Among the spaces on the heights he obtained glimpses of walled towns, and beyond, in the far distance, a grey haze suggested the waters of the Mediterranean.

"A land flowing with milk and honey," he mused. He thought of the time, of which he had been told, when his ancestral tribesmen, moving in from the north-east, roamed over the land as shepherds and goatherds, of the year of the great hunger when they migrated south to the borders of civilisation, of their enslavement and escape, and their long wanderings under his patient leadership in the desert. He recalled that monotonous waste pitted with multitudinous prints, in sandstorms, its few watering places and feeding-grounds, and the frequent trekking for fresh pastur-

age, the perpetual struggle with elemental forces for bare subsistence; and as his eye roved appraisingly over the hills and valleys before him, now glowing in the soft colouration of sunset, it seemed to his mind, wearied with straight horizons and waste levels, a country worth fighting for.

He knew something of its history and political importance. It stood in the centre of the civilised world equidistant from the great nations, whose lines of communication ran along its plains and over its hills. The people who held both the high and low lands in force would occupy a strategic position of enormous strength; it was possible that they might be able to decide the balance of world power, and even attain to universal dominion. On the other hand—and for a moment the old sheikh held his breath—they might be caught and crushed between contending armies and become the thralls of races more powerful than themselves. But he was not only a tribal leader, he was a statesman and warrior of the first order, and his eyes kindled with the fires of resolution. It was a time when the will of the strong was the law of life and men with a purpose carried it out, regardless of the rights of others. He rose.

"We shall go over to that land and conquer it," he said. "We shall drive out the inhabitants and their false gods, and shall establish on those high hills the worship of Yahweh. And afterwards. . . ."

A SPIRITUAL LANDMARK

Moses did not live to carry out his scheme of adventure, but other ambitious chiefs took his place and led the hordes of fugitive clans into Palestine. They were only half civilised and loosely organised, but the

idea of an all-powerful god directing their affairs and the practice of a common worship proved a strong unifying influence, and fashioned them into a formidable fighting force. The process of conquest and assimilation went on for centuries with victory and defeat, progress and degeneration and recovery, until they became masters of the central plateau, and even of tracts beyond. There were still men among them who dreamed of wider dominion; of subduing the larger nations, and sweeping on to world-empire. But it was not their destiny to be paramount in the field of war; their path lay in the quieter direction of moral and spiritual achievement, and the interest of their history lies not so much in their petty military campaigns as in the evolution of their religious faith.

The fact that they had been rescued in what seemed to them an extraordinary way from slavery and given a country and a nationality made a deep impression on their imagination. They felt that as a whole and as individuals they had been saved, or redeemed, by supernatural agency, and in time the idea took on a special significance; they came to believe that their god had entered into a bargain, or covenant, with them to the effect that if they remained faithful to him and kept his law he would vindicate them and establish their supremacy among the nations, an article of faith which became so firmly rooted and so passionately held that it influenced and coloured all their subsequent religious, social and political thought.

They continued to be moulded by the teaching of a series of inspired thinkers. Gradually their conception of a tribal god broadened and ever larger functions were attributed to him. From being a judge and administrator, the arbiter of their own destiny, he became a world-god, the universal law-giver, righteous

and just; and finally they reached the supreme conception that there was but one God, the Omnipotent Creator and Omnipotent Governor of the Universe, who was gradually revealing Himself, through the mind and spirit of man, in the eternal principles of the moral law. It marked the beginning of a new era in the spiritual progress of humanity.

But assuming, as others had done, that truth proves intangible and evanescent unless embodied in outward symbol, they transmuted their vision into a code of prohibitory laws and a stereotyped ritual of which one of the chief features was the practice of sacrifice and blood-sprinkling. God was never less real, but He became more of a monarch than a father, far aloof from sinful mortals, having no real fellowship with them, jealous of His laws, and punishing disobedience to the third and fourth generation.

Though they gloried in their religion life was grey and hard for the people. The individual was subordinated to the good of the whole. Attention was concontrated on fulfilling the law so that the nation might be justified in the sight of God. They had not the hope of a personal happy after-life; the future state was merely a shadowy haunt of spirits somewhere under the earth. Though a large number had shaken themselves free of the vices of idolatry and had adopted a high standard of moral purity, the masses were still ignorant and superstitious, with rudimentary morals. These often rebelled and hankered after liberty of thought and action, and, undeterred by warnings and penalties, introduced impure elements into their worship and sought in secret the sensuous delights of foreign cults. It was to this constant backsliding that their leaders attributed the misfortunes which fell upon the nation.

LOST GLORY

Caught in the fierce movement and clash of world-events the race struggled vainly to maintain its position. After much suffering the majority of the people were deported to Babylonia, where with bitterness of soul they realised that they had failed to solve the mystery of existence. Though through all the violence and confusion of their vicissitudes and exile they held to their national ideal of monotheism, they were inevitably influenced by the other faiths with which they came into contact. They were led to think more of a Principle of Darkness, a Satan, opposed to the God of light, and a kingdom of evil under his rule with a host of angels, but they never gave him more than a subordinate place in their theology, holding that God created light and darkness, good and evil. To bridge the gulf which they had made between God and themselves, they also took over the idea of good angels who acted as His messengers.

When they were allowed to repatriate themselves it was only a remnant of the most orthodox who returned to Palestine. These faced a new life and a new destiny. They had salved nothing but a belief in God and a knowledge of His law. Having lost confidence in themselves and been given a second chance, they felt they must rely more upon Him and show Him greater loyalty. They must fall back on a stricter legal relation to Him, have more precise statutes, and give them the most minute and exact obedience. As Jews they must become more and more an exclusive people, a holy race, regarding other nations as unclean and abstaining from association with them.

They proceeded to carry out their determination, even denying racial kinship with the few in Galilee and

Samaria who had been left during the exile and had intermarried with outsiders: they regarded these as half pagans and refused them the right to assist in the rebuilding of the Temple, a deprivation which produced a hostility and hatred on the part of the Samaritans which time was never to allay.

Such a spirit naturally developed an ecclesiastical government and a rigid canonical code. The law and polity of Moses—or what was considered to be his—was regarded as the standard for all time, and oral tradition the key to it. Revelation and inspiration were held to have ceased, save in so far as they continued in some respect to express themselves through recognised teachers in their interpretation of the Law.

At first it was the priests who studied the Law, but their duties came to be limited to carrying out the sacrifices and ceremonies and to various sanitary offices; and a special class, the copyists or scribes, grew up, men of all classes and occupations, who devoted themselves to the task, and who taught and trained others. They were the theologians or scholars, were addressed as "rabbi," and became a powerful force in the community. The supreme administrative council, or Sanhedrin, at Jerusalem, ruling according to the canon and tradition, was composed of these scribes along with the high priests and elders or influential laymen, and in every town and village was a synagogue or church, the centre of local religious life and a school for the study of the Law and the instruction of the children.

Under this system the people were drilled and disciplined into personal morality and social well-being. Not all felt the restrictions imposed upon them, or objected to them, for many were animated by an ideal which, if limited, was not ignoble. With the sense of failure and unworthiness which had always dogged hu-

manity acutely developed, they had a passion for sinlessness, for purity of life, and were striving to attain it with an earnestness and courage which was the highest form of heroism. But their method destroyed the freedom and spontaneity of life; it frowned on laughter and humour and innocent gaiety, and produced a sad and gloomy temperament.

This was the logical conclusion to their search for a solution of the problem of life. It meant that the letter had again killed the spirit; that the organisation had superseded the personal influence of God.

Their relation to other races crystallised into a permanent attitude. Though God was the one God of humanity, they held that He was in a special sense their God. They were a peculiar people to whom He had chosen to reveal Himself and His Law; only through them could other nations have knowledge of Him; only by the path of their faith and ceremonial could He be approached. Deep in their nature they had a feeling that they were destined to make a spiritual conquest of the world; that in the fulness of time a master-mind of the type of David, their ideal of a king, but surpassing him in power, would come who would redeem them again from their oppressors and establish the Kingdom of God on the ruins of the pagan world. If only they could keep the law perfectly this leader would be sent, and the golden age be inaugurated. The various schools held different views of his nature and aims; some, indeed, imagined that a form of God Himself would appear. But generally it was believed that he would be a man, a superman, of the lineage of David. He was given various titles, "the son of David," the "restorer," the "comforter," the "saviour," but more often the "messiah," or anointed one, from the fact that kings were anointed with oil

which was supposed to possess and bestow some magical efficacy. Many maintained that he would be preceded by Elijah, one of their great prophets and reformers, who would reappear as a sort of forerunner. The thought became an obsession and accentuated their racial pride and isolation.

This attitude lost them the spiritual sovereignty which they coveted. Not a few thoughtful pagans throughout the world were attracted by their robust idealism. Here, they reasoned, was a people who had not altogether failed in the seach for truth, who had a vision of the principles governing the relation of men to their creator and the personal and social virtues that made for happiness and peace. Nothing could better sum up the whole duty of man than their saying that he should do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly before God. They seemed to have found a key to the unification of races under one divine leader. What could such a faith not achieve if it adopted the missionary method? It would break down all barriers, introduce a universal bond of worship, bring about a world-kingdom regulated on spiritual principles with God over all, directing all, and ensuring peace. The idea was like the fresh breath of spring after the darkness and chill of winter.

But all who sought to enter the movement found the way barred by what they considered absurd requirements. Men of spirituality and culture would not, for instance, submit themselves to such a rite as circumcision.

THE ETERNAL QUEST

Meantime the world in general pursued its way heedless or contemptuous of the tiny nation on the sunburnt Syrian heights; a commonplace world, as it had al-

ways been, despite wars and bloodshed and oppression; made up of a few who were wealthy and privileged, and the multitudes who were poor or enslaved and toiled at daily duties in field and orchard, in workshop and shop and office, in school and barracks; but all engaged in the same blind game, playing for a little, growing up, learning, gossiping, marrying, sinning and repenting, and at last lying still in death; a world which in its better moments felt that life was unsatisfactory and incomplete, and sought a true guide to conduct, relief from weariness and sorrow, some light on the state beyond the grave. In many ways men sought the secret of happiness. Some plumbed the depths of evil, refining it of its grossness but realising only satiety and tragedy; some cultivated beauty but discovered that they were merely skimming the surface of reality; others sought refuge in philosophy only to find that all thought led to deeper perplexity; others took to asceticism and the discipline of desire, securing by their efforts some meagre consolation but not peace.

Was the world after all in the clutch of a cold impersonal fate? It seemed the only explanation. Yet behind the baffled aspiration and endeavour persisted a consciousness that some transcendent influence prevailed and that some right method of living was possible. Despite repeated failure and disappointment men never ceased to seek for the unknown God; to long for protection and direction amidst the hazards that encompassed them; to crave for purification from the defilements that seemed inseparable from vital activity.

GREECE AND ROME

Greece appeared illuminating the world with the glory of new thought and speculation, bringing the

imagination and intellect into harmony with its ideals and embodying these in forms of surpassing beauty. Overrunning the East, it encountered the Jewish nation whose severe life it interpenetrated with its own subtle culture and grace, but offering to it no better faith than the old forms of impure worship, and no higher conduct than that of shameless paganism. The serious-minded section of the nation regarded its activities with scorn, and when, under the Grecian Kings of Syria, an attempt was made to hellenise their social and religious customs they rose in desperate revolt, their patriotic ardour being fed by a new pictorial literature which visioned the coming of a messiah, a "son of man," who would lead them to victory and punish the evil-doers and establish a kingdom of saints.

The uprising was successful, and for almost a century an independent Jewish dynasty ruled in Palestine.

During this period several well-marked cleavages developed in the public life of the nation. The principal power passed into the hands of a small conservative party, the sadducees, composed of the military, the politicians, and the priestly aristocracy, who had come to form the chief element in the Sanhedrin and were regarded by foreign governments as the representatives of the people. It was remarkable that they held unorthodox views on all matters regarded vital by the race. They were worldly opportunists, maintaining that religion had nothing to do with politics and that men were masters of their own fate. The entire Law to them was confined exclusively to the first five books of their scriptures, and they denied the validity of tradition. Personal immortality they argued was not taught in these books, they refused to admit the existence of angels and demons, and they scoffed at the idea of a national deliverer or messiah. In order to in-

crease their influence as well as their revenues they sought to centralise the religious festivals in the Temple at Jerusalem. In theory the people had free access to God, but in practice this was denied; their sins made them unworthy to approach Him, and they could only do so through intermediaries in the persons of priests who were specially set apart as a superior and holier order.

In opposition to the sadducees came into existence the pharisees, a popular, or democratic, party possessing the characteristics of an order, for the members bound themselves by vows to observe certain general rules. They upheld the purity and authority of the law and the necessity and value and binding force of the tradition which supplemented it. They believed in angels and demons, in heaven and hell and predestination and in a bodily resurrection, and in the advent of a messiah, the "son of man," or "son of God," whose kingdom would only be entered by the pious. Piety, they honestly believed, could be obtained by ceremonial obedience. The party contained some thousands of the ordinary priests, most of the rabbis and the thoughtful laymen of the nation, but not the mass of the people. It formed a salutary force, safeguarding home and school and synagogue against the inroads of paganism, but, like all castes, it was apt to develop intolerance, censoriousness, hypocrisy and pride.

There were minds unsatisfied even with the puritanism of the pharisees; these separated themselves entirely from society and formed a brotherhood of celibate ascetics, the essenes, who dwelt in the deserts, had everything in common, and were noted for their industry, purity and simplicity of life—they represented that still small voice of protest against the ways

of the world which had been heard faintly in every age.

Rome appeared, a military giant of practical mind, moving across the world with mighty strides, imposing law and order and security, running broad roads everywhere that made rapid communication possible ever after, treating its subjects and their faiths with the tolerance of conscious superiority and power, but bringing no better knowledge of spiritual realities and leaving the soul of man unsatisfied. It found the Jews a prickly problem, but they were again crushed into subjection, and Palestine became a vassal kingdom paying tribute to Cæsar. The Sanhedrin was deprived of temporal rule but left free to deal with religious affairs. The high priest was treated as the chief of the nation and the sadducees as its representative men; these continued to use their power to enrich themselves; they multiplied minute regulations, the breach of which incurred severe penalties that became part of their revenues; and they also secured profits from the sale of the sacrificial stock in the Temple, a traffic repugnant to the religious sense of the best minds in the community.

On the throne sat Herod, a native of Idumea, a territory to the south of Judea, the people of which had once been conquered by the Jews and compulsorily circumcised. In the contemptuous eyes of the latter he was only a half-Jew, and was equally despised and hated. No position was more difficult than his, for he had to serve two masters, the Emperor of Rome and the Jews, to patronise and promote the pagan spirit and to uphold Judaism. Strong and astute, he managed to do both. Palestine under his rule became a strange country of mixed exotic and native influences,

of palace and Temple, theatre and synagogue, sport and sacrifice, austerity and pleasure, luxury and poverty.

All the more necessity, the pharisees felt, for the stern observance of their Law and the rigid maintenance of their national spirit. It was the only way in which they could survive in a godless age.

THE WORLD AT ITS WORST

The world began to suffer from physical and spiritual exhaustion. Civilisation, satiated and poisoned with self-indulgence, was corrupt and anæmic. Man's religious sense had become sterilised; religion was a tangled mass of dreary idolatry, esoteric and occult systems, deifications, demonism, sorceries, auguries, magic, obscene rites, divinations, oracles, omens, fire and animal worship, fetichism. The human spirit needed purging. But every remedy had failed; man had come to an end of his resources. Experience had proved that no system of philosophy or theology or ceremonial obedience sufficed. Even the Jews, for all their sober righteousness and pure morality, had not solved the problem; for them also the perplexity and burden of life remained.

The cry now was not "What must we do to be saved?" but "Who shall save us?" Some higher, stronger influence than that of man was needed. People hungered for a living person, one who would come from behind the terrible veil and speak as man had never spoken, and with an authority above all human voices, to whose kind and understanding mind they could confess their sins and failures, upon whose love and compassion and forgiveness they could, like children, sob themselves to rest.

Whatever the purpose of the world was, men had so far been unable to understand and appreciate it or to create for themselves a harmonious and happy life. They could hardly be blamed for their ignorance of that purpose, though they might have some responsibility for their defeat and despair, since they had not made the best of the self-revelation of Himself which God had been vouchsafing from the beginning. But surely He whose creation the world was could not be unconscious of the situation or remain indifferent to it. If He existed and suffered, as a good Father would, with the suffering of those whom He had created, He was bound even according to the standard of earth to take notice of it. It would be a proof that He was what their instinct believed Him to be if He recognised the desperate need, and in some way revealed His real self to them and gave them clearer light to guide their steps along the dark and bitter pathway of life.

II: THE STORY OF THE THIRTY YEARS

The childhood, youth and early manhood of Jesus were not the least remarkable periods of His career. It is possible in some degree to become familiar with His surroundings, trace the development of His mind, and see how a realisation of His special nature came to Him; to learn of His studies, His home and out-of-door life and His holidays; and in what manner He gained a knowledge of humanity and the general world-situation.

DAWN

In the dusk of an autumn dawn the figure of a priest stood, sentry-wise, on the highest point of the Temple at Jerusalem, gazing across the wide chasm of darkness towards the east, where he watched for the first signs of the morning. As the sky paled and a film of cloud caught a gleam of colour he sent a signal below and three blasts from silver trumpets pealed musically over the city and stirred it into life.

The gates which pierced the battlemented walls swung open and a horde of unclean, repulsive beggars scrambled to their accustomed stations within, followed by a group of money-changers carrying tables and bags of coin, and by rough-tongued traders with the live-stock needed in the offerings and sacrifices. From the streets and lanes, up the steps and across a great bridge, came the townspeople in ones and twos, and then in a continuous stream; men and women of

every class, illiterate and cultured; poor from the squalid lower city and wealthy from the suburbs; going to worship or make vows or present gifts; to have disputes settled, or to meet and gossip with friends, according to immemorial custom.

Mingling with these were villagers, shepherds from the wilderness, caravan merchants from far-off countries—Arabia, Italy, Egypt, Babylonia—and pedlars of souvenirs; while here and there was a visitor, a member of some alien race, curious to observe the religious rites of this peculiar people

These, too, passed into the outer court. This enclosure with its marble pavement, and cloisters supported by double rows of pillars, was the alien part of the Temple, unsanctified, and free to all; and, conduct being unrestrained, it echoed with the bustle of movement and the sound of raucous voices. Temple police were there to keep order, but in the northwest angle rose the Castle of Antonia, on which at a high post of observation Roman guards also stood vigilant, watching the scene, for at any moment the normal hubbub might swell suddenly into the uproar of a seditious tumult.

Only Jews went further, others being checked by a warning notice in Greek and Latin displayed upon a low protecting screen:

> *No stranger is allowed within this balustrade: whoever is caught within will be responsible to himself for his death, which will ensue.*

Those who came to worship ascended a flight of steps to a terrace and entered, through high gilded gateways, the court of the Israelites; this was divided

into two sections: beyond the lower and smaller the women could not go; the higher and larger ran round the central sanctuary and within its side porches were numerous trumpet-shaped boxes for the reception of tribute, voluntary contributions, and the money-equivalent for the burnt and sin offerings. Higher still was the Court of the Priests and the slaughter house, with its rings where the sacrificial animals were tied, the pillars where the carcases were hung and the tables where they were flayed and washed; and in the centre the enormous terraced altar of unhewn stones on which a fire perpetually burned; huge as it was, the hearth was sometimes too small to consume the piles of flesh that were heaped upon it.

High above all rose the Temple itself, built of enormous blocks of snow-white marble embellished with gold and silver and precious stones and exquisitely carved cedar and sandal wood. In front was the Holy Place with the golden altar where incense was offered, morning and evening; and shut off by a curtain of blue and scarlet and gold was the Holy of Holies closed to all men save once a year to the High Priest. It was dark and empty, in significant contrast to pagan shrines. To the Jews where there was nothing there was God. In the popular imagination it was His dwelling-place.

The priests on duty for the day, some fifty in number, had been busy long before sunrise. By torchlight they had inspected the courts and buildings, had cleansed the altars and prepared the fires and killed the sacrificial animals, and now when the bustle outside was subsiding they were met in the Hall of Hewn Polished Stones to decide who should offer up the incense, which symbolised the wafting to God of the prayer of the worshippers. It was the most coveted

duty, but so numerous were the priests connected with the Temple that it rarely came a second time to the same man.

To clear their minds of distracting thoughts they spent a time in prayer, though few of the faces relaxed their look of eager anticipation. All were of a well-marked ecclesiastical type, many of them coarse and unspiritual, but others distinguished by finer lines and nobler expression. One of the latter in the background was a provincial priest, called Zacharias, a man over sixty years of age, who was fulfilling his week's turn at the Temple. Although of high moral character and rigid in his obedience to the requirements of the Law, he was of no account in the eyes of the officials: he was but a simple human soul, one of those saints who are out of harmony with the conditions about them and live their real life in the spirit.

The fate of his race weighed heavily upon him. Within his own lifetime tragic events had occurred which had brought the best of the nation to despair—the destruction of their independence when the Temple was stormed and the Holy of Holies entered by a military general, the spoliation, later on, of its treasures, the scourge of war, the capture of Jerusalem with tremendous slaughter by Herod, the introduction of pagan literature, laws, games and gladiatorial contests, the degradation of the office of the High Priest, the curtailment of the power of Sanhedrin, the erection of the golden eagle of Rome over the principal gate of the Temple, the increase of taxation, and the terrible domestic crimes of a ruler whom they loathed and despised—horror upon horror that had numbed the people and weakened their faith and social conscience and led them into worldliness, immorality and scepticism. Like not a few the old man prayed wistfully, though

without much hope, for the political freedom of the nation as well as for its moral purification and revival.

A private sorrow was also graven on that thoughtful face. His wife Elizabeth, younger than he, was a priest's daughter, and, like her husband, irreproachable in character as well as faithful in the discharge of her household duties. These were to her, as they were to all Jewish women, her special work and part in the religious life of the nation. Women were not permitted any direct participation in religious affairs, their sphere being purely domestic; but it was considered that if they attended well to the wants of father or husband or brothers and thus enabled these to study and keep the Law they earned the same merit as if they themselves were doing so. Many had the religious sense greatly developed and were deeply attached to their faith.

To the grief of both no children had come to stir and warm the atmosphere of their home, and of all unfortunate fates in life this was the one most feared in the Jewish community. Childlessness was believed to be a punishment of God for sin. Was it not written in the sacred books that if His commandments were faithfully kept there would not be a barren woman amongst them? "Ah," Elizabeth's neighbours said, "she is paying for some guilty secret lying hidden in her life." The disappointment of Zacharias was as great as her own, for, like all Jews, he desired a son to carry on his name and the traditions of his house. Even yet, in his serene and dignified age, he continued, through sheer force of habit, to pray for a blessing which he knew it was foolish to expect.

The lot proceeded and the duty fell to Zacharias. The others, keenly disappointed, cast envious glances

at him, but however obscure he was God's choice, and they could not complain. Overcome himself he had no time for reflection; a gong clanged, and clad in white shining linen, with head covered but feet bare, and carrying a golden censer, he entered the Holy Place accompanied by assistants, who arranged the fire and then withdrew, leaving him alone. Standing in front of the altar, and trembling with emotion, he waited for the signal which told that the people without had prostrated themselves in silent prayer. It came, and he seemed conscious of the sudden hush. Scattering the incense on the red embers he watched the clouds of fragrant smoke arise and uncoil in the quiet air. Then a realisation of where he was, in the immediate presence of God, sent a thrill through him—and from his heart sprang, half-unconsciously, a wild petition, the expression of his old longing to which settled habit had accustomed him. Would God not, even yet. . . .

Outside, the sacrifice was laid on the altar, and all eyes were turned towards the entrance to the Holy Place from which Zacharias should have emerged to pronounce the customary blessing. Suddenly a sensation that something was wrong possessed the worshippers, a feeling that Zacharias was longer in coming out than he ought to be; they looked sideways at one another; excited whispers passed from mouth to mouth. "Had he been unworthy?" "Had he been ceremonially unclean?" "Was he slain?" The other priests grew uneasy and then angry.

But there he was, with his assistants, stumbling forward uncertainly to the top of the steps, a dazed look upon his face. He took his place beside the others and uplifted his hand.

Silence. Only the murmur of the city came to the

ears of the throng. They looked up: he was standing in the attitude of blessing; they saw his lips move, but no sound fell from them.

"He is speechless," they said one to another.

He motioned, they understood, and again they bowed.

God bless thee and keep thee. God make His face shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee. God lift up His countenance upon thee and give thee peace.

The familiar words passed through their minds but they heard no voice.

Impatiently they suffered the remainder of the service, the presentation of the meat and drink offerings, and the singing of the psalms accompanied by instrumental music, with the occasional clang of cymbals and blasts from silver trumpets. Responding with the last "Amen" they crowded into the outer court, where they excitedly discussed the incident, or hurried away to the city, eager to be the first to retail so remarkable a bit of Temple gossip in the markets and bazaars.

Zacharias was summoned to the presence of the chief priests who, suspicious and censorious, questioned him searchingly, but whatever had befallen him he shrank from disclosing it, and merely indicated that he had lost his power of speech at the altar. As soon as his week's turn was over he left his quarters in Jerusalem and travelled home, and there in privacy and at leisure he laboriously related to his wife by writing and signs his most singular experience:

"The lot to burn the incense fell to me. I trembled and feared, but found courage and performed the duty. Then my heart went out in appeal to the Most High in whose presence I was, that Israel might be redeemed from its misery and—ay, I said it—that we might have a child. And straightway I had a vision and I shook,

but a voice told me not to be afraid and that my prayer was heard and that you should bear a son——"

Elizabeth stifled a little hysterical laugh.

"A son—this old woman?"

"Yes; and we have to call his name John; he is to be a joy not only to us but also to others, and he will be inspired, as the preachers of old were, and turn many to God; and he will prepare the people for the coming of a new and mighty Kingdom. And I, who had begged for the boon, even I, doubted; I asked how I could be sure of this thing. And I was justly punished, for the voice said I would be dumb until our son was born. And I was dumb and could not bless the worshippers. But I thank God for His goodness to His people and to His humble servant."

Elizabeth could scarcely credit the story, but as her amazement lessened and her assurance grew she became more excited than her husband, for if it were true her reproach amongst her sex would be removed, and in a way that would be cause for elation and pride. She questioned him further and asked:

"Did you tell the chief priests?"

"No; they would have been angry and covered me with contempt for having degraded the Holy Place with such a request; besides, they would not have believed that I, who have no standing and am as nothing in their eyes, would receive so important a message from heaven."

It was true. It was a materialistic age, such as comes at intervals in the ebb and flow of human development. The world was dull and stale and unspiritual. Least of all did the leaders of religion expect to have communications from the Unseen. Mystery encompassed them, latent forces, unknown laws, but they were as men walking in the dark without

knowledge or vision of the power and wonder around them.

In the days that followed the two pondered the matter, and the possibilities it involved, but their thoughts always returned to the central fact that their son was to herald some new manifestation of God's purpose in the world, the advent of some great leader, perhaps the one so long foretold in their scriptures who would by his genius extricate Israel out of its political and social troubles, and give it a new position of power among the nations.

Eagerly, therefore, they watched for any sign that might indicate the imminence of such an advent; for news of another birth accompanied by circumstances of unusual character. They could not be blind to the significance of the fact that the first intimation of the new era had been made not to ecclesiastical dignitaries or professors of theology but to a humble country priest. Would the redeemer come out of a palace or a village; would he be born of queen or some chief woman, or of a lowly maiden whose heart was pure?

A LOVE STORY

Winter came, cold and wet, the wind whistling among the blistered crags, the rain beating the sun-baked soil soft in the glens and plains, snowstorms sweeping over the heights and whitening the Jerusalem streets. On the exposed terraces the vine-growers were at work, and every hollow and valley was populous with peasants ploughing and sowing seed.

The months of spring brought sunshine and warmth. On the fig trees fruit-buds developed on the tips of the twigs, the almond trees became suffused with pink blossom, the vines broke into bloom, and everywhere

the flowers appeared as silently and as thickly as stars in the sky at dusk, first the red and purple anemones, next scarlet poppies and blue cornflowers and yellow marguerites, crowfoot and daisies, and then a multitude of others of every hue. It was the morning of the year and brought with it a sense of exhilaration and renewal to hearts hardened by the sordidness or staleness of their lot, and to the young an uprush of longing for the adventure and glory of living.

One idyll, of many, was running its course in Galilee, that northern part of the country which was so curiously different from the southern. The lofty range of Judea, for all its terraces of olives and vines, was bare and stony, while it was comparatively isolated from the rest of the world. Nature softened towards the north, and, beyond the wide plain of Esdraelon, presented a mass of bracing hill country, fertile and beautiful in contour and colour. Valley, lake, river, forest, pastoral slope, all contributed to its attractive character and its prosperity. Through it also ran the highways between the civilised parts of the world; the caravan road which connected the opulent East with the Mediterranean and Egypt wound round the lake and over its hills to the coast. Though tiny in area—only about 1,600 square miles—it was crowded with Jewish and Greek communities and throbbed with many-sided life and activity.

The Galilean Jews were of a distinctive type; more industrious, business-like, and economically more independent than the Judeans, they showed greater bodily vigour and mental alertness, with an ardent love of freedom. So fiercely nationalist were they that they had always been a source of embarrassment and trouble to the governing powers. On account of their contact with foreign influences they were less angular and

conservative in their ideas than the Jerusalem Jews, although equally devoted to their faith and its ritual. Even the women had greater liberty than was usual; they not only attended to their household duties, but helped the men in the fields and engaged in trading. The girls also had fewer restrictions imposed on their movements.

Their relation to the Judeans was that of a rude but prosperous country community to a highly organised and artificial city society. The intellectual and polished but spiritually proud citizens of Jerusalem despised them and treated them with a superciliousness that bordered on contempt. It was not only that their manners were free and their dialect rough and provincial; they were contaminated by their intercourse with pagan aliens, they did not make the Law their continuous study, and they were unlearned in its oral traditions.

The scene of the idyll was Nazareth among the hills where they began to dip into the plain of Esdraelon. The highway ran down the winding valley, and in one of its irregular folds the town was built; it had grown up around a perennial spring, now a fountain by the roadside, where the water issued from a stone spout. Unlike most towns of the time it possessed no wall, its secluded position and its circle of hills being regarded as sufficient protection. From each side of the road the streets and lanes spread tortuously up the slopes, the lower section being occupied by houses in close and massive formation, and by markets and bazaars, the upper by isolated dwellings which gradually gave place to gardens and orchards; beyond these were open fields of wheat and barley, stretching to the rim of the surrounding heights.

One of the chief alley-ways was lined with the work-

shops of craftsmen in wood, a continuous row, each merely an arched recess. Here a carpenter and builder named Joseph pursued his trade, a grave, kindly man trusted by his fellows and respected by all on account of his descent from David, the hero-king, the splendour of whose achievements still impressed the imagination of the race. Neither clever nor ambitious, he was a steady and efficient workman.

Many maidens had passed before his eyes but none had attracted him, and he was now beyond the usual time for mating and still unwed. But during these spring days he became aware that there was one whose modest and gentle demeanour was appealing to his nature. Mary was a girl in her teens, with oval features, soft brown skin, and dark lustrous eyes. But it was not so much her physical charm and grace which drew him as the qualities of her mind. He was conscious in her of a clear intelligence, a purity and delicacy of thought, a beauty of holiness, which pointed to what was one of the rarest of possessions in that evil age, a stainless soul.

Of humble birth, though of honourable lineage, she owed much to her parents. She and her sister Salome —now married to Zebedee, a fisherman of the Lake, and the mother of two boys, James and John—had been carefully brought up and trained. Girls were not educated in the same way as boys, their minds not being considered adapted for the study of religion, but there were always exceptional natures who made the most of their limited opportunities. Mary was naturally thoughtful and receptive, and the history of her race, that long-drawn-out drama of vicissitude and affliction, had deeply moved her imagination; she was acquainted with the aspirations and hopes of its best men, and had learned by heart much of its devotional literature.

Her conception of God was one which was common at the time. He was the Lord of Lords, all-righteous, all-mighty, all-merciful, but terrible also in power and judgment, and too remote from the everyday experience of women to find a lodgment in their warm hearts.

What interested Mary, as it did many others, was the general conviction that the greatest of all the leaders of the nation, who would free it from its political bonds and usher in a golden age, was yet to appear, and if he was to be born of woman the honour might fall to any of them. Moreover, he would be a living personality, and one upon whom their maternal nature would be able to lavish affection as well as bestow reverence.

Mary was not perfect. Like the best women of every age she was handicapped by the conditions of her time and the limitations of human development, but her beauty and grace were such as made her, of all members of her sex in the world then, the most fitted for any high duty which Heaven might entrust to her.

Joseph intimated his desire to her parents and the union was arranged, and in the presence of members of both families the contract of betrothal was drawn up. Joseph paid over the bridal gift and the two were married in fact and in law, but, following the prevailing custom, they postponed for a year the formal ceremony and festivities. Mary returned to her father's house and resumed her household occupations.

With the suddenness often associated with momentous happenings came one day a startling experience. To her intimates, long afterwards, she told the story:

"It came so quietly and quickly that it was over before I realised the marvel of it. I was in my room when the light seemed to grow very bright, and I was conscious of some one in the midst of it who said softly

'Hail Mary!' I stood amazed wondering what it meant. I began to tremble, and the voice spoke again and told me not to be afraid, that God had looked upon me with favour, and I was chosen to bear a son whom I was to call Jesus; he would be so great and holy that he would be called the son of the Most High, the son of God; he would fulfil the desires of our race, and bring about a kingdom to which there would be no end. I was bewildered. 'But,' I said, 'I am not yet fully married, and how can I have a son?' And the reply came, 'Nothing is impossible with God. His power will accomplish what I have said.' And as I bowed my head in submission I heard the words, 'For your comfort go and visit your kinswoman Elizabeth in Judea.' Then I said, 'I am the maidservant of God; may it be even as you say.' And with that I found myself alone and the daylight was there but the room seemed dark."

It was a moment of emotion and crisis that would have thrown any ordinary girl into a tumult of nervous excitement; she would have run instantly to her mother or confidantes and poured out her extraordinary tale. But Mary was of the order of the wise; her finely tempered nature withstood the shock of the revelation; she maintained her balance, quietened her fluttering heart, and kept the matter to herself.

Feeling, nevertheless, the need of the sympathy and support of one of her own sex, and obedient to the direction she had received, she arranged a visit to Elizabeth and left with friends in one of the Galilee caravans which periodically travelled to Jerusalem.

It was a journey of about sixty miles and gave her opportunity for reflecting on her strange position. She naturally connected the communication with the popular idea of the messiah, recalling that the term the "son

of God," which her mysterious visitor had used, was one of his recognised titles; the name Jesus, also, meant "saviour." The thought that she, of all Jewish women, was to be the mother of such a personage filled her with awe as well as joy and pride. As she travelled, her mind dwelt on the references to him and his mission in the national literature, and she phrased her feelings in the language and imagery of its psalms and hymns.

When she reached the home of Elizabeth she ran lightfoot to her as to a refuge. Elizabeth looked curiously at her; there was something in the refined face, the glow of a strange emotion, a spiritual exaltation, which thrilled her with a sharp sense of anticipation. In a few hurried words Mary explained the situation. Elizabeth listened with increasing astonishment. This humble girl, her own kinswoman, poor and unknown, the mother of the future king! Any lurking vision of a splendid advent vanished, but she met the disappointment with the greatness of a true woman.

"Oh blessed among women!" she exclaimed. "But what is this that you should come to me; you who are to be the mother of the messiah? Happy are you who believed, for assuredly what you have been told will come to pass."

It was the culmination of Mary's experience; no longer able to restrain her pent-up emotion she poured out the medley of passages from the Scriptures that had been running like music through her mind.

For three months the two women, the old and the young, clung to each other, supporting one another with sympathy and service, talking endlessly of the future and the career that lay before their sons, flushed with pleasure, yet not unaffected by anxiety and awe at the solemn responsibility laid upon them. Mary was

reluctant to meet the faces at Nazareth, but shrinking at last from the stir and publicity which the birth of John, now imminent, would occasion, she slipped away along the road to Galilee.

John's birth was an event so abnormal that it created widespread interest, and many people came to congratulate Zacharias and Elizabeth. On the naming day the friends and neighbours invaded the house in force. They spoke of the child as Zacharias.

"It is not to be Zacharias," said Elizabeth, "but John."

"John," they remonstrated, "none of your people is called John."

Elizabeth insisted.

"Ask Zacharias," they said. "He is the father; he knows better."

Zacharias was standing by, keenly observant, and they made signs to him. He indicated that he wished a writing tablet, and when it was brought he wrote on it,

"His name is John."

Surprised and not a little perplexed, they acquiesced; and immediately the spell upon Zacharias snapped; he spoke, and his first words were those of thanksgiving. In the days of silent waiting he had been pondering afresh over the prophecies regarding the destiny of the race, and as he leant over the child his thoughts, like Mary's, cast themselves into the poetical form best suited to express intense religious feeling; he broke into a fervid description of his son as the forerunner of that messiah who would realise their ambitions and deliver them out of the hands of their enemies that they might be able to serve God without fear, ending on the higher note that this leader would be one who would *"give light to those who now dwelt in darkness*

and in the shadow of death and guide their feet into the way of peace."

He related what had taken place at the altar, and the company, at first incredulous, gradually became convinced that something out of the ordinary had occurred and carried the news throughout the district; and people at their work paused and wondered and asked each other what manner of child this was going to be. By and by it reached the ears of the Temple priests and startled them for a moment—but the age of miracles was past, the story was probably the delusion of a foolish old man, and there might be an element of trickery in the matter of the birth. Time, at any rate, would tell what value was to be attached to the incident, and meanwhile there was no need for official action.

In her home amongst familiar things and in friendly association with her neighbours Mary was conscious of bearing a secret which must inevitably be revealed. How would the matter be straightened out? There was only her own word for what had happened. Would she be the subject of a painful scandal? She comforted herself with the thought that God was just and would surely make her innocence known.

The time came when she could no longer conceal her condition; her explanation was received with incredulity and Joseph was informed. He was hurt and shamed. Like most intelligent Jews he believed in the advent of a messiah, but this child, according to Mary, was to be the offspring of the Divine, the son of God and begotten of Him, which was impossible. God was one, indivisible and supreme. To admit the idea of a son would destroy the fundamental character of the national religion.

Moreover, if the messiah were to have such an

origin he would not come by the way of common flesh. So holy a being would not be born of a village girl. The thing was abhorrent, blasphemous. For however much the best were honoured, women were regarded as being in their nature akin to the animal. Every day in their prayers men thanked God that they had not been born women. "How," it was written in the scriptures, "how can he be clean that is born of a woman?"

Joseph and his friends, therefore, shook their heads. Mary had been wronged and her sin had taken on a religious aspect in her mind: she was obsessed by a grotesque delusion. The requirements of the law must be fulfilled; she must be exposed and condemned. But in the seclusion of the little house he had prepared for her Joseph pictured his dark-eyed bride, so winsome and helpless; and the idea of subjecting her to the ordeal of a public divorce tortured him; he resolved at last on a private separation, which could be accomplished by handing her a letter before two witnesses.

Thinking of it he fell asleep, and into that mysterious subconscious region of which so little was known came a communication from the Unseen. The position was made clear to him and the statement of Mary confirmed. To his plain and devout nature this was sufficient guidance; he carried Mary off to his home, thus ratifying the marriage and giving her the moral and legal protection she needed.

It was a simple home, but, like most happy women within their own walls, Mary was content. Her outlook and Joseph's was similar to that of Zacharias and Elizabeth,—coloured by their Jewish upbringing and limited by their imperfect knowledge. It was possible, they thought, that the coming one might become a military dictator, or an imperial statesman, or perhaps a philosopher, prophet, or law-giver; in any case he was

to be the agent who was to bring about the redemption of Israel. The future, therefore, teemed with brilliant possibilities.

The story could not be kept secret; it was talked about in the bazaars and markets, and especially at the fountain on the main thoroughfare to which the women and girls resorted morning and evening with their water jars, and where every tit-bit of gossip regarding births, betrothals, marriages and deaths, was retailed. Strangers passing through heard it—caravan men from across the desert, traders seeking custom, patients who had been consulting Jerusalem doctors or trying the sulphurous baths at Tiberias, pilgrim-seekers after truth of many races and religions. A virgin with child, who was the son of the God of Heaven, destined to become King of the Jews and ruler of the nations, and to inaugurate a new era of world peace!—it was a tale which appealed to their imagination; and simple-minded superstitious men, listening agape, gave it credence and carried it with them wherever they went.

In the sophisticated centres of civilisation it was scoffed at, but it was otherwise in simpler regions. Across the lonely spaces of the East it travelled. There in the absence of other means of communicating intelligence it was an unwritten law that news must be passed on by those who heard it; and from mouth to mouth the story proceeded until it was known throughout the Orient. It was eagerly received in the Jewish colonies, for it confirmed their ancient prophecies; it provoked discussion among peoples who were persuaded that the Jews had a special destiny to fulfil, and it fascinated a class who believed that some intimate relation existed between humanity and the phenomena of the sky. What to ordinary folk was an inscrutable

expanse of twinkling lights was to them a living book of authority and a guide to action, and they studied it with patient care. A flashing meteorite, a fleeting comet, a temporary star—the result of some tremendous explosion or collision in remote space—each possessed its significance and bearing on public affairs.

When, therefore, these priests of nature heard of the incident in Galilee they were instantly interested and swept the heavens with increased vigilance in order that they might detect any sign which would denote a birth of such universal concern.

THE GLORY OF A STABLE

As the waves flooded some isolated pool on the coast and, seizing a fragile shell, dragged it out to the open sea, so the forces of the outer world invaded Nazareth and drew Mary out of her quiet home. From the Roman officials came a notice that a census of the Empire was being taken and, in accordance with their tribal custom, Jewish heads of families were required to register themselves at the place to which they originally belonged.

Joseph heard the intimation with annoyance and misgiving: it meant for him a journey to Bethlehem, the home of his ancestors, three or four days distant at a time when he wished to be beside his girl-wife to safeguard her from possible contumely. And then the thought flashed into his mind—was it not written in the scriptures that the messiah was to be born in Bethlehem? Was this imperial order not an instrument of God's purpose, and was he not meant to obey its leading? Mary, he decided, must accompany him that the prophecy might be fulfilled. Also he might secure

work, or open a carpenter's shop, at Bethlehem, and need not return to Nazareth where, it was likely, Mary would never be at her ease amongst her own sex.

The journey which might have been interesting to the pair on account of the romantic history of the spots they passed was a trial to their patience and faith: every sense was kept on the strain in the effort merely to get on without hurt. Joseph walked, striding by the side of Mary, who sat on a sturdy and sure-footed ass. The weather was hot by day and cool by night, and the rough road was crowded by parties on the same errand as themselves. No definite date had been appointed for the enumeration, but every one was desirous of getting the task over, and all Palestine seemed to be on the move.

They passed through the main streets of Jerusalem with but a short rest, being anxious to be at their destination, and towards evening came within sight of Bethlehem, a cluster of square limestone buildings, grey with age, piled on a ridge to the left of the highway. Mary saw it with a feeling of intense relief, for she was very tired, sore with the constraint of riding so far, and apprehensive of what lay before her. Joseph watched her with grave regard, wondering, for his part, whether he would be able to obtain the rest and comfort she required, yet occasionally glancing over the landscape which had associations for him that went back over a thousand years. Historic figures came to his mind: in these fields to right and left Jacob had pastured his flocks: David, his own ancestor, had rambled over them as a youth and tended sheep on the rocky slopes, while Ruth had gleaned in the patches of cornland. Very tranquil the scene looked in the light of evening, and seemingly unchanged with the passing of the centuries, save at one point, in the south-east,

where a sinister mass of buildings rose against the sky, the palace-fortress of Herod the King.

Turning in at the side road they moved up, with other late-comers, to the gateway and entered the town, she almost fainting with fatigue, he increasingly anxious for shelter and privacy. The streets and lanes were thronged with animated crowds, mostly visitors, jostling, pushing, gesticulating, gossiping; and the noise and confusion were bewildering. Here was an opportunity for some gracious spirit to show kindness to two belated and forlorn strangers, but all were engrossed with their own affairs, and in the deepening dusk the tall villager and his pale and worn companion passed on unnoticed.

Joseph asked the way to the inn. It was pointed out, a simple shelter for the accommodation of travellers and their beasts; the wall was built four-square with an edge of roofing sloping downwards and covering the platform of stone on which the human-kind found quarters, the camels, mules, and asses being huddled together in the centre space open to the sky. He stood at the gate and looked in and around: the place was squalid, malodorous and overcrowded: it was hopeless to think of finding a quiet corner there.

"Is there not room anywhere?" he enquired in despair.

"Try the outside stables," he was told, "there are not so many there."

He found the stables, a series of caves in the limestone cliff, unclean, damp and cold, and into one which seemed deserted he led the ass, gathered some straw which lay about and spread it on a slight elevation above the earthen floor beside a feeding trough, lifted Mary and laid her down, and utilised their meagre resources in making her comfortable.

There was no lowlier shelter in all the world that night, and it needed all Mary's strong faith and sweet courage to prevent her breaking down: as it was, a sense of the strangeness and loneliness of her situation swept over her and a sob escaped her in the darkness. . . .

Out in the night the air was still and clear and cold: in the vast remoteness of the universe the stars scintillated and the planets shone with tranquil radiance. A dim silhouette of hills fretted the horizon and down in the shadowed plain sheep were browsing. The faint rustle of their movement, with the call of crickets and the cry of a night-hawk, were the only sounds that broke the silence. A flicker of flame shone in a niche of the rocks: in front sat a number of shepherds; nearby, barely visible, stood the motionless figure of another, armed and alert, for at any moment a prowling robber from the town or a wolf or jackal from the wilds might steal in and seize one of the flock.

These were the animals bred in connection with the sacrifices in the Temple at Jerusalem, and the men who pastured and guarded them were of no ordinary type. Living by day and night close to the heart of nature they were weather-beaten, simple and hardy, of clean life and devout heart, many of them nearer heaven than the officers of religion whom they served. In their visits with the lambs and sheep to the Temple they had heard the gossip concerning Zacharias and John and had discussed the matter amongst themselves as they sat round their camp fire, wondering in their uncultured but sincere and earnest way what it might portend.

On these men burst a stupendous sensation: the veil of the material about them clove asunder, and the light and movement of the spiritual dazzled them with

its glory. A voice, which spoke with the sweet clarity of notes of music, bade them not be afraid, for it was good tidings that were being announced to them.

"Good tidings!" How often they had heard the words; they were those cried up and down in the villages when a son was born to parents.

The saviour, the voice went on, for whom all men were longing, had been born that night, and if they chose to verify the statement they could find the babe lying in a manger in a stable at Bethlehem.

As the voice ceased the radiance brightened and extended until the entire firmament was a flashing expanse of mystic splendour, while from the heart of it, as from an unseen choir, issued a strain of exquisite melody, a divine symphony, the very essence of harmonic sound, which seemed to resolve itself into human words of praise and promise, fragments of which they heard but could not comprehend—

"Glory to God in the highest . . ."
"On earth peace. . . ."
"Goodwill among men. . . ."

As swiftly as the vision came it went, and the night closed around again dark and starlit and cold. The shepherds stood in a maze, blinded, stunned. When they came to themselves they asked each other if they had been dreaming. But all could not have dreamt the same dream. There was only one thing to do; they must verify the truth of the announcement.

Turning towards the lights of Bethlehem they hurried with long strides up the road to the town, where they made for the inn and cattle-stalls. A woman whom Joseph had found to attend to Mary directed

them and they found what they sought. Joseph came out: in the dim light cast by a lantern he parleyed with them. On hearing their excited story he led them in to where a girl lay on a pallet of straw with one weak arm thrown protectingly over a sleeping babe in the feeding curb beside her. They gazed down in wonder upon the sleeping child, and spoke to the mother, telling her of the scene they had witnessed and the words they had heard; and as she listened and they saw her face, they wondered again, for it seemed to them to make a glory in the darkness, so pale, so luminous, so beautiful it was.

They went out and told their strange tale to as many as they met at that late hour. Some regarded them curiously, thinking they were intoxicated; others laughed and shrugged their shoulders in unbelief; many were interested and even thrilled at coming into touch with what seemed the supernatural, but doubted that the messiah would appear in such a fashion. Neither incredulity nor scepticism, however, moved the shepherds, who, still excited and exultant, returned to their fields and their flocks. . . .

What did it mean? The spiritual life is not a region of chaos: it is governed by principles which are not less logical and intelligent than those which underlie the material life. Man plans: so does God. Nothing happens by chance in the higher economy of the universe. This night when Jesus was born privilege was enthroned in the world; rights were only for the well-born and the wealthy; culture was for the few; religion was in the hands of an official class who alone had access to the All-highest; the mass of the people in every country were workers and slaves. And yet Jesus, the most powerful personality in the universe after God,

came by way of a stable, and his parents were poor. It was a circumstance of infinite significance. It was the first direct blow to that social system by which birth, riches, power and learning ruled the world. Multitudes ever after were to find comfort and inspiration in the fact that Jesus was born, like themselves, into an environment of poverty and toil.

AN OLD MAN'S SIXTH SENSE

Next day Joseph found a refuge for Mary in a house in the town. As their story spread this became the centre of attraction, and the child the subject of dispute. Interest, awe, unbelief, scorn, marked the attitude of the people according to their temperament and training.

When, through the shepherds, an account of the matter reached the Temple the same differences of opinion were shown there. The officials at first were startled; the incident seemed connected with the previous affair, but they recalled the tendency of popular delusions to repeat themselves and, reassured, treated it with levity—the idea of uncouth shepherds gazing into heaven!—of the messiah issuing out of a cattle stall!

Among the frequenters of the courts were a few whose hearts were not so petrified, who were still in touch with the unseen. One well-known figure was an aged woman, Anna, who was said to be over a hundred years old; ever since she had lost her husband seven years after marriage she had practically lived in the Temple, worshipping, fasting, praying. When the story came to her ears it instantly arrested her and she wondered if there was more in the news than was supposed.

Another to whom it was told was Symeon, one of the city's laymen saints, who believed in God's good purpose for the world. His spiritual sense quickened as he listened to the gossip; unlike the priests he was ready to welcome truth in whatever form it came, and he resolved to watch for the appearance of the wonder-child, when, as he expected, he should be presented in the Temple.

Joseph worked at his trade until three ceremonies in connection with the birth of the child could be observed. Rooted deep in the remote past, relics of their primitive practices, these possessed more than an archæological interest to the people. The first, that of circumcision, had, in the course of their history, taken on a religious significance and become an integral part of their scheme of life. Not even a Jew-born could legally belong to the nation unless he subjected himself to this rite, the sign-manual of the race. It baptised him, as it were, into the national privileges and responsibilities, and gave him the right, when he grew up, to teach and work within the pale of Jewry. It was performed on the eighth day after birth, and at the same time the name was bestowed on the child. In accordance with the direction they had received Joseph and Mary called the boy Jesus.

Then came the curious archaic act of presenting him and redeeming him, based on the event which stood out in the early story of the race like a flame in the dusk, their deliverance from Egyptian slavery, and the salvation of their first-born from death. In commemoration of that mercy every eldest boy-child had been surrendered for service in the sanctuary, but as the nation developed and the population grew in numbers all in excess of those required were allowed to be redeemed or ransomed by the payment of a sum of the value of

about ten shillings and so freed to follow other pursuits.

The third ordinance which was often combined with the second was the purification of the mother, six weeks after the birth, originally one of the sanitary regulations common among primitive tribes, and embodying the idea that by sacrifice and blood life could be cleansed, and the Deity appeased. The woman had to offer a sin offering in the shape of a young pigeon or turtle dove, and the child was then presented along with a burnt offering, a gift expressive of thanksgiving and renewed devotion—a yearling lamb—but if this was too costly she might offer simply a turtle dove or a young pigeon. These offerings became a perquisite of the priests and were consumed by them.

Mindful of the high destiny of the child, Joseph and Mary resolved to present him at the Temple at Jerusalem, the central shrine of their religion. Being too poor to provide, in addition to the redemption money, the sacrificial lamb, they took advantage of the alternative, and secured two young pigeons of which every household kept a stock.

In the cool of the morning of the appointed day they set off for the great white city. They entered the Court of the Women and ascended the steps which led to the Court of the Priests where Mary stood in the line waiting her turn. Though the service was over worshippers were still moving about, and she noticed an old white-haired man walking slowly up and down and scrutinising her and the child with keen and kindly eyes. A priest approached, took her offering, sprinkled her with blood, and declared her to be cleansed. "It is my first-born," she said, and paid over the redemption money. The priest pronounced a benediction and the ceremony was over.

When she stepped back the old man hovering near came to her and gently taking the babe in his arms gazed upon it with a look of mingled delight and pride. That mysterious attribute of the human mind, the sixth sense, told him that this was the incarnate Light from heaven. He lifted up his eyes as if in prayer:

"Lord," he said in a voice of deep emotion, "now I can die in peace, for I have seen the accomplishment of Thy good purpose. I have seen the light which will be the glory of Israel and will lighten the nations of the world."

Joseph and Mary heard him with startled interest; here was another tribute to the wonderful nature of the child, but surely the vision of this aged seer was at fault; he was attributing to him in the future too wide a sphere—King, not only of the Jews, but of the other peoples—the Greeks and Romans, the Egyptians, and those strange heathen races in the far outer regions! Even as the thought passed through their minds he spoke again, and to Mary:

"Do not cherish wrong ambition. The child will have a stormy career, and in the end your own soul will be pierced as by a sword with the sorrow of his fate."

Across the pale, flushed face a shadow fell.

"Who is he?" she whispered to a casual looker-on.

"Symeon, a godly man," was the reply; and, as an aged woman joined the group, "This is Anna, another of our saints." Anna took in the situation at a glance, and, bending over the child and caressing him, softly broke into expressions of pleasure and thanksgiving.

The incident was a mere side-eddy in the noisy stream of Temple life, and meaningless to the passers-by, and it remained unnoticed by the officials.

Glad that the ordeal was over, Joseph and Mary bore the infant back to Bethlehem.

For many days Mary was puzzled over the enigmatical utterance of the old man, but, unable to understand it, she locked it away in her mind, and it was only in after years that its poignant meaning became clear to her.

A FLIGHT FROM DEATH

A group of oriental foreigners, dark and grave, mounted on camels with silver trappings and coloured saddle-bags, crossed the Jordan by one of the lower fords and, passing Jericho, ascended the white winding road among the desolate hills and entered Jerusalem by the eastern gate. They looked less like traders than ambassadors who, engaged on some important mission, pushed forward with resolute purpose.

They reached the bazaars, noisy with crowds of buyers and loungers, dismounted, and began to question the shopkeepers sitting at their doors in a manner which showed that they were confident of receiving an answer.

"Where is this great one who has been born King of the Jews?"

They were regarded with surprise.

"What odd thing is this?" said one. "What do you know of the King of the Jews?"

"We know of his impending birth and now his star has risen and we have come to pay him homage."

"Star! What star?"

"They are magicians from the east," whispered another. "And pagans."

"We know nothing of the matter," brusquely said the first.

"Look at this," a third chimed in, pressing his goods upon their notice, "fresh fabrics from the looms of Damascus; and these the latest fashion from Alexandria and Rome."

With quiet dignity they passed on and renewed their question. In the minds of some whom they accosted it stirred a vague recollection of recent gossip; with others it raised a contemptuous laugh.

Once when they were the centre of a group a keen-eyed man lounged near, and, after listening for a time, drifted away. Within a few minutes he was in the fort of Antonia reporting what he had heard to Herod's intelligence department. He was a spy, a member of the secret police upon whom the king relied for information as to what was going on in the city.

The officer on duty looked thoughtful. "This," he said, "will have to go to Herod himself."

When Herod in his palace heard the report he frowned and leant back in weary annoyance; he had already sufficient public troubles to distract his mind. Jerusalem was a volcano, seething with unrest, and in danger of exploding at any moment. The visit of these easterners was the result possibly of some stupid superstition, but even so if it became known amongst the excitable population a disturbance might ensue.

"What exactly do they say?" he asked the informer.

" 'Where is he that is born King of the Jews?' "

"*Born* King of the Jews!" he exclaimed sharply. He himself was King of the Jews, but he had not been *born* King, and the thought stung. He spoke in a fury.

"Is this thing getting about?"

"I fear so," was the reply.

The fear was well founded, for within the hour one report succeeded another that the tale was spreading, and that a sense of uneasiness prevailed.

Herod acted swiftly and craftily. He sent out an order calling together as many members of the Sanhedrin as were at hand, the chief priests, and especially the scribes, who from their occupation had an accurate knowledge of the scriptures.

When they arrived he stated a case for their elucidation, flattering them by appearing to defer to their superior learning.

"This messiah that all expect—where is he likely to be born?"

It was a reasonable question and one that caused them no surprise, for it exercised many minds. There were numerous theories regarding the advent of the deliverer, but they were safe to give the reply which had at least the merit of scriptural authority:

"In Bethlehem, for so the prophet announced seven centuries ago and so we believe."

"What prophet?"

"Micah of Morêsheth."

If Herod's hellenistic culture made him sceptical of the application of such an ancient prophecy to the events of his day he did not show it: instead he seemed to be impressed.

"What did he assert? . . . Stay, bring the book and read the passage."

They brought in the papyrus roll and turned to the place and one read in a loud droning voice:

"O, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you be little among the townships of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth a king to rule Israel: one whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."

"Read on," Herod said curtly.

"And it shall come to pass in that day, said the Lord, that I shall cut off your war-horses and destroy your chariots. I will cut off the cities of your land, and

throw down all your fortresses. I will cut off your witchcrafts, and you will have no more soothsayers."

Herod sat up and glared as the voice went on chanting.

The words seemed to have become personal and a strange feeling came over all that it was the man before them who was being accused and condemned; it was as if his doom were being pronounced. They gazed fearfully at him.

"Your idols also will I cut off, and your sacred stones, and you will no more worship the work of your hands. I will pluck up your sacred groves: I will destroy your cities. I will execute vengeance in anger and fury upon the pagans such as they have never heard of."

"Enough," roared Herod, his coarse face flushed and angry and his great hands trembling. With a gesture he swept them out of the room.

"Childish folly," he muttered, "and yet. . . ."

Well, he would leave nothing to chance.

The foreigners were rounded up and brought to him. They came into his presence nervous and awed, but his air of geniality put them at their ease. Evincing what seemed an innocent interest in their quest he enquired regarding the star they spoke of and when it had appeared. They told him it had blazed out suddenly some weeks previously in the western sky. Herod had no astronomical knowledge and was unaware that temporary stars, the product of natural causes, sometimes appeared in the heavens, and he had the current belief in celestial omens and portents.

Addressing them suavely he said, "I can tell you where you will find the child you seek . . . in Bethlehem, for this is according to our sacred books. Go there, and when you have discovered him come and let

me know, for it is meet that I also should go and give him homage."

Though the night had fallen the party set out for the wayside village. As they cleared the streets and struck into the highway over the rolling hills they saw the new star still shining, apparently above the place to which they were travelling, and they rejoiced at what seemed confirmation of the directions they had received.

As the story of the wonder-child was well known they had no difficulty in finding the house.

Joseph and Mary were astonished and alarmed to see the tall, swarthy, strangely-attired men crowding the doorway and instinctively stood in front of Jesus who was lying on a pallet in a corner of the room. A few words served to reassure them. Mary stood aside and pointed to the babe, and the men, unslinging the beautifully carved caskets they carried, sank to their knees and extended their arms in obeisance. Then they opened their cases and took from them little gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh, representing the most precious products of their country, and laid them before the infant.

What Joseph told them of the circumstances of the birth of Jesus convinced them that they had been right in their surmise, and they were pleased that they would be able to carry back to Herod so important a piece of intelligence for the Jewish nation. But when Joseph and Mary saw them in the morning they seemed perturbed and anxious.

"It is a dream we have had," they said; "we have been warned not to return to Jerusalem for Herod has designs on the life of the child."

Silently and swiftly they departed from the house, made their way down by a little frequented path to the

Jordan, and passed over into the unknown out of which they had come.

In the humble home at Bethlehem they had left their gold and frankincense and myrrh, but in their hearts they carried back with them over the desert a mystic fragrance as if they had been in contact with some sweet-smelling spiritual influence.

Joseph and Mary were uneasy, for they knew the King to be a cultured savage, and utterly ruthless in his savagery, who would destroy them with less compunction than he would crush a fly, and their apprehension was justified.

When the magi did not appear and Herod realised that his plan had miscarried and his purpose was foiled he became mad with rage. A calmer man would have dispatched spies to hunt out the child and kill him, but in his moments of passion the King followed the primitive brutal instinct to strike at once. He ordered a company of Roman soldiers to proceed to Bethlehem and slay every child in the town under two years of age—there should be no loop-hole of escape.

That night there came to the dreaming Joseph a mysterious warning to take Mary and Jesus and escape out of the country to Egypt and remain there for the present. Joseph was now like a child in the hands of God, and with the faith of a child he rose, wakened Mary, gathered their few belongings together, and went for his ass. When he returned Mary, as eager as himself, was ready, and in a few minutes they moved like shadows out into the silent street and by dawn had covered the fourteen miles to Hebron. Here caravans were made up for Egypt, over 200 miles distant, and they attached themselves to the first lot of traders to leave. . . .

Behind them in Bethlehem a spasm of horror came

with the dawn. Into the town filed Roman soldiers who closed the gates and placed guards on the walls and commanded that all boy infants under the age of two should be brought to them. Wondering and suspicious the parents came with the little ones. There were not many, not more than a score; and after all had been produced the mothers were told to leave them and be gone. Suspicion became a certainty and an uproar arose. The frantic women clutched their babes and sought, shrieking, to escape. The soldiers beat them with the flat of their swords, tore the children from their arms, struck down the husbands who interfered, and cleared the scene. In a few minutes the butchery was over.

Herod read the report from the officer in command with a grim smile and tossed it aside. That disposed of the infant pretender to the throne. He turned to more important business. . .

Leaving the brown sown fields and the pasture lands the refugees descended into a region of grey rocks and then passed into the mournful splendour of the desert, where the sky was a dome of glowing heat and the air was languorous and still except when some vagrant wind caught up the lighter particles of sand, and where the sun went down each evening in a vast wilderness of colour. They camped in mud villages beside oases of palms and set out in the pallid beauty of the dawn over shapeless hillocks pitted by the tracks of countless camels, and by and by came to settlements on the margin of the Mediterranean Sea where the child was lulled to sleep by the wash of the waves on leagues of yellow sand. Then into the plains of Egypt watered by the mysterious river from the unknown wilds of Africa, with far horizons fretted by domes and palm trees, and into a region swarming with hu-

manity where they were absorbed in the common life of a prosperous Jewish colony.

Not for long. Two months later reports arrived that Herod was dead. The way, therefore, appeared to be clear for their return, and they retraced their steps across the desert. But as each fresh party of travellers was encountered the news of the situation in Palestine became less reassuring. They heard how Herod, incurably ill, tortured with pain, and haunted by the memory of the wife whom he had slain, had been taken from place to place in the vain hope of discovering some cure to mitigate his agony: how a wild mob, incited by two popular rabbis, had torn down the golden eagle from the Temple gate and paid the penalty by being burned alive, and how the tyrant, dying at last, had planned that the principal men of the country should perish with him in order that there should be universal sorrow when he passed away.

Then they heard, what affected them personally, the terms of Herod's final will. He had nominated his son Archelaus to succeed him in Judea and Samaria, with the title of ethnarch—a term signifying a kingship without the prerogatives of sovereignty—and therefore head of the nation; he was a counterpart of his father and as bitterly hated. Joseph, who had some thoughts of seeking Bethlehem again, despite the fear that the people there might now resent their presence, came to the decision that Judea would be no safe sanctuary for Jesus, and he was confirmed in this view when he heard of a revolt in Jerusalem in which three thousand of the citizens and passover pilgrims had been slain.

What of Galilee? He was told that Antipas, the second surviving son of Herod, had received that province along with Peræa on the south-eastern side of the

Jordan, with the title of tetrarch, or dependent prince. Of his character Joseph knew little, but he could not be so dangerous as Archelaus.

He also heard that the third son, Philip, had been given the districts to the north-east of Galilee, inhabited mainly by Syrians, Arabs and Greeks.

Weighing the advantages of the several regions, he decided for Galilee. After traversing the coast road and striking inwards towards the Esdraelon Plain and mounting the foothills he and Mary, travel-stained and weary, found rest at last in the haven of Nazareth.

Nothing having been heard of them for months their reappearance was a surprise and Mary became again the subject of spiteful gossip. But time dulled their interest, the days brought fresh incidents; and were there not more important matters to claim attention—housework and fieldwork, buying and selling, festivals and sacrifices? In the natural order of things the talk about the child ceased and Mary settled down to that supreme task of a Jewish woman—managing her household according to the Law.

THE BOY

The home which Joseph established was one of the humblest in the town. It stood outside the massed buildings: a small four-square, single-room cottage of the white stone of the district, with a latticed window, a door with wooden bolts, and an outside stair leading to the flat roof which was protected by a parapet: in front an almond tree gave shade, and a pomegranate with its crimson flowers gave colour; and in the rear were a vegetable plot, a fowl house, and a pigeon cote.

The furnishings were of the simplest character. The

floor space was divided into two parts: one, higher than the other, was used as a sleeping place. Here at night was laid a rush mat and upon it the thin quilt or mattress which served as bed. In the morning these were neatly piled into a recess in the wall. On the lower division were a couch, which also did duty as a chest to hold the valuables, a small table, two chairs, and a few jugs and jars containing water and oil. A lamp stood in a niche of the wall.

This was the little world in which Jesus lived as an infant. During his earliest years he was in his mother's exclusive care. As he lay and watched her she went about her duties, grinding the wheat, kneading the dough, spinning yarn, sewing and mending, speaking to him the while in mother-language, and now and again, when she remembered, stopping and gazing at him in a kind of perplexity, trying to fathom the mystery behind those innocent eyes.

Neither she nor any one afterwards penetrated that mystery. To all appearance he was as other children. Yet he was different. They were links in a continuous chain of organic life, entirely human, with natures inherited from the past. He was also fashioned of flesh and blood, subject to the law and play of material forces, susceptible to the instincts and passions common to humanity. But he also possessed a quality which linked him in some indefinable and inexplicable way to the spiritual and unseen. This made him in a sense not less human but more so, because his mind and body were super-sensitive to every influence and impression: they were, so to speak, more advanced or developed than the ordinary type. Jesus, in fact, was to show to the world what was possible and ultimate for humanity: he was to foreshadow in his person the perfect man.

But Mary had no knowledge of this as she fed and dressed the child or hushed him to sleep in her arms. She began to teach him simple words of Aramaic, a variant of Hebrew and the common tongue of the country, and listened with delight to the music of his attempts to repeat them. One of the first things he learned to lisp was *"The Lord is our God: the Lord is one,"* thus early imbibing the idea of the existence of God and His unity. Then came a sentence from the Law which embodied the soul of Judaism:

The Lord our God is one Lord, and you must love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

He became familiar with a certain order in the home; there was the prayer morning and evening; the washing before meals and giving thanks afterwards; the ceremony of lighting the lamp before sunset on Sabbath evening, and the ritual in connection with the meal which followed when he was blessed by Joseph. After he was four there was also the regular visit to the synagogue where he saw a dark crowd of men praying and chanting responses. His mind awoke and he began to ask questions about these things:

"Why did they go to the big house, and why were the men singing?"

"Why did they put on their best clothes when they went?"

"Why did his mother light candles one by one at certain times?"

"Why did they sometimes live out in booths on the roof?"

"Why did Joseph place little boxes on his forehead and left arm and make curious movements?"

"Why did he wash his hands before every meal and murmur some words?"

"Why did he, as he entered the house, touch something on the doorpost and then kiss his finger?"

Mary did her best to explain in the patient way which mothers have. In regard to the last, for example, she held him up and showed him the little metal tube inserted in the wood containing a miniature roll on which were written sentences from the sacred books and said that the name that was visible through the aperture was "Almighty"; the little "boxes" she called by the difficult name "phylacteries"—they were leathern cases which contained tiny parchment scrolls with scripture sentences and were worn because of some old, old command laid upon the people; and gradually as he was able to understand she told him once-upon-a-time stories in a simple, graphic way; of the nation's adventures in the long ago; of far wandering in lonely places, of battles with evil peoples, of wonderful heroes, and of great sorrows; all against a dim background of Something Beyond, the tremendous figure of an Almighty One who was bigger and mightier and more to be obeyed than any one on earth, the Lord God, whom all men and women and children had to reverence and worship.

His quick eye noticed every incident. He saw her patiently threading a needle and mending clothes and she told him that a particular garment was too old to repair.

"Why?" he asked.

"Because the new bit would be too strong for the old cloth and so it would easily tear again."

Outside he heard one of the hens uttering a cry of alarm, and saw the chickens snuggling beneath her.

"Why are they afraid?" he asked.

"Look up, my son."

High in the air he saw a hawk, motionless, save for

a momentary quiver of wings, and learnt of the ceaseless warfare that goes on in nature.

Once when she had lost a coin he went crawling on his knees, helping her to search for it, and never forgot her cry of joy when she found it.

Sometimes she took him with her on her visits to the workshop, where he played amongst the fragrant shavings or watched Joseph fashioning branches of trees into ploughs, or yokes for the necks of the oxen. Once he saw him suddenly stop, and witnessed with grave interest a tiny splinter of wood being taken out of his eye.

When he was five he ceased to be his mother's boy and passed into the charge of Joseph, who taught him the commandments and elementary duties of the religious life and gradually initiated him into the meaning of worship, pilgrimages and festivals. Two years later he was sent to the elementary school, the House of the Book, attached to the synagogue, where for several hours each day he was taught reading, writing, and simple arithmetic.

The teaching at home and school was related entirely to religion, for, with the Jews, life was religion and religion life. Man's chief end was to know God and His law, and this could only be attained through study of the scriptures. Upon such knowledge was based conduct, duty, obedience. Faith was secondary. The purpose, therefore, of the schoolmasters was to bend the minds of their pupils to morality rather than to train them to intellectual achievement.

The reading exercises were from the canonical writings, which included the books of the Law—the first five books of the Old Testament, or pentateuch, which were believed to have been written by Moses inspired for the purpose by God—the historical books of the

prophets, and the general literature, such as the psalms and proverbs, which embodied in so perfect a literary form the devotional aspirations and wisdom of the race. As copies of these were not common in the homes of the poor the scholars listened to passages being recited by the schoolmaster and repeated them until they were letter perfect, a method which, while cultivating their memory, made them verbally familiar with many portions and enabled them in after life to recall and quote them with ease and accuracy. Jesus, one of the most thoughtful and diligent, stored up in a retentive mind a wide variety of phrase, precept and illustration which were to spring readily to his recollection in later days.

This formal side of his education was completed by regular attendance at the synagogue services on Sabbaths, and also on Mondays and Tuesdays, the market days on which people gathered in the town from far and near, when the scriptures were read through in order. No priests officiated at these services and no sacrifices were offered, and any one of social standing and knowledge could give an address.

Along with such interests went the home influence of his father which ministered to his boyish imagination and fancy. At night, when the young children were asleep, these two sat within the flickering radiance of the lamp or on the roof in the moonlight, the man revealing something of the human quality in the life of the nation, the spirit of its heroes and saints, the splendour of its achievements, the glamour of its poetry and romance; the boy listening and questioning, his brown sensitive face aglow with feeling and eager with unappeasable interest.

He had the usual preoccupations of youth. Life was lived largely out of doors and he was constantly in the

open, now gathering firewood for his mother on the hills, now playing with his companions in the streets. There were few set games; usually the doings of their elders, witnessed at marriages and funerals or other occasions, were reacted in solemn mimicry. They might have had a wider range of wholesome exercise had not their fathers forbidden them to adopt the athletic sports of the pagans. Chariot races, boxing, gladiatorial and dramatic exhibitions were loathed by all strict Jews.

But there was the endless pageant of life before them, the bazaars and shops with the men at work—potters, smiths, sandal-makers, tailors, dyers, jewellers, perfumers; the khans and markets with the supplies of vegetables and fish; the pack animals laden with produce from every country; the hawkers and their wares; and all the minor eddies of movement from the main tides of traffic flowing past.

What caught the eye of Jesus and interested him specially were occasional figures out of the common. Now it would be a pharisee making his way fastidiously through the crowd, regarded respectfully by some, rudely by others, with broad fringes on his cloak and large phylacteries on his arm and forehead, who would stop now and then and appear to utter a silent prayer: or again, but more rarely, it would be a solitary essene clad in white, and clean and ascetic-looking; or at the street corner he would see a crowd listening to a speaker with a fine intellectual face, and would be told that he was a pilgrim-missionary of the sect of the stoics who were teaching new ideas about God and inculcating stern virtues. At these he would stand and gaze thoughtfully—wondering.

His enquiring mind continued to ask questions. He saw the process of wine-making, and once or twice the

goatskins burst. Why? Because, he was told, the men had carelessly taken old worn-out skins to hold the new wine. When the masons excavated foundations for houses he noted that they never began to build until they reached the solid limestone, and he learnt the reason why: when the winter cloudbursts occurred and the floods rushed down the steep streets structures founded only a few feet deep in the surface sand would have been undermined and destroyed.

Along with his companions he rambled often to the top of the hill where his eyes roamed, half-unconsciously, over a vast grey region of rounded summits, and on the dusty plain caught glimpses of a vaster outer world in the gleam and glitter of cavalcade and litter and mounted officer and marching legions; but as yet that was only a shapeless vision and beyond his comprehension.

He became strong and tall, clear of eye and supple of limb, and bright and alert in mind. Joseph and Mary began to note in him a conscious effort to distinguish between good and evil and an increasing ability to discern what was right and to act on the knowledge. So obedient and amenable and in his boyish way so wise did he become that they allowed him ever larger liberty.

When he reached the age of twelve they took him with them to Jerusalem to the passover festival—that important pilgrimage feast which, originating in the custom of primitive sacrifice and offering, had become associated with the escape of the race from slavery, and was now combined with the feast of unleavened bread, both occurring as one in the spring of the year. It was obligatory for every Jew, who was able, to attend on the occasion. There was now nothing to fear, for Archelaus, after a violent spell of power, had just been deposed and banished; Judea had been attached to the

Roman province of Syria, but was given a procurator of its own directly responsible to the Emperor with headquarters at Cæsarea on the coast. Under this system the sadducees maintained their influential position and were satisfied with the Roman rule, while the pharisees were growing more embittered and antagonistic.

Jesus looked upon the journey with a boy's anticipatory relish: he was to travel through the country and see the Holy City and that wonderful Temple which, as his mother impressed upon him, was the earthly dwelling place of his heavenly Father. When the necessary tents and bedding and provisions—dried fruit, cheese, bread and olives—had been secured the three set off with a large company of Galileans. Nature was flooded with sunshine and colour, the roads were smooth, for all had been specially repaired, and the sepulchres by the way had been whitened that defilement might be more readily avoided. A general sense of pleasurable anticipation, of joyousness, prevailed, and the high spirits of the pilgrims found expression in singing songs.

For Jesus the journey was a pictorial excursion through the history of the nation: every mile brought spots associated with some stirring event in the past. The climax came when in the distance Jerusalem was sighted, rising rock-bound out of the olive-clad ravines and orchard slopes, with its forts and palaces battlemented and turreted; its massed houses and domes and palm-tops; and towering above all the marble terraces of the Temple and the great white-and-gold roof of the Sanctuary glittering in the sunlight. The regard of Jesus for that sacred building had passed from childish awe to conscious reverence: it was the place where the One Almighty God, the maker of earth and heaven, met with men, His children: it was his Father's house.

Joseph and Mary joined a family in the city for the celebrations and made their quarters in a booth on the roof. With wondering interest Jesus watched the progress of the proceedings. In the evening the head of the house searched every nook and corner for leaven, the symbol of corruption, for no trace of it must be left to vitiate the purity of the ritual. Next morning Joseph carried the male lamb which had been purchased to the Temple, and slew it before the priests, who caught the blood in a golden bowl and sprinkled it on the altar. After the carcase was flayed and cleansed by the priests and certain parts reserved for the altar it was conveyed again to the house, a spit of pomegranate was thrust through it, and it was roasted whole.

In the evening all sat down to the passover service and meal which was arranged according to an elaborate symbolic ritual. After a cup of red wine and water had been taken, bitter herbs eaten, and a second cup of wine poured out, Jesus, as the youngest present, asked, as he had been taught:

"Why is this night different from other nights? What do you mean by this service?"

As the explanation was given the thoughts of these grave men went back to the dark and humiliating days of enslavement, and the great deliverance that had been wrought, and passionately they indulged the hope that the same God who had befriended them then, would again work out their freedom in the present evil time.

A psalm was sung, the second cup of wine drunk, and unleavened cakes, dipped in a paste of fruit and vinegar, partaken of. A third and fourth cup of wine were filled and drunk to a blessing; a final psalm and hymn were sung, and the benediction was pronounced.

If the passover was shadowed by sombre memories and unfulfilled longings the feast of unleavened bread

which followed was characterised by gladness and gaiety. Jesus saw the sheaf of the first-fruits presented in the Temple and accompanied Joseph when he offered the freewill and peace offering, a sheep, which was slain at the door of the sanctuary. All that he witnessed naturally impressed a mind responsive as yet only to the brilliant appearance of things. The splendour of the buildings, the rich colouring, the white-robed priests, the chanting and instrumental music, the altar gutters streaming all day with blood, the smoke of the sacrifices hanging cloud-like over the city—all combined to produce a boyish feeling of wonder and awe.

Joseph and Mary did not remain the full period of the festival: they attached themselves to the first large company of Galileans, several hundreds strong, who left the city. When they moved off from the Temple towards the Damascus Gate they assumed that Jesus was with his young friends from Nazareth. On the open Judean ridge they looked for him, glancing casually up and down the long procession, but without noticing him. Still they were not anxious, and it was not until the stopping stage for the night was reached that they realised that he was missing.

Both were startled and alarmed: the old dread that had gone to sleep awoke and they reproached themselves for being so careless. It was not possible for them to travel back that night, but ere dawn broke they were hastening to Jerusalem, Joseph silent and grim, Mary torn with anguish. They went first to their friends, but nothing was known of Jesus; they searched the city, the bazaars and markets, every thronged street and lane; and late at night sank into uneasy rest. With the morning came clearer vision—why, Mary asked herself, had there been no warning on this occasion? Could it be that he was in no dan-

ger? Where would he be safest—where if not in the Temple itself?

She and Joseph hurried to the building and into the crowded courts and came to one of the porches where teachers were sitting instructing pupils. These men were followers of the great rabbi Hillel whose authority was then paramount throughout Judea and whose enlightened views were moulding the mind of the people preparing them for a broader and nobler outlook on life. Mary's eye flashed over the groups, and in one, amongst a half-circle of men, she saw a slight youthful form in a coloured tunic. It was Jesus. Uttering a cry of joy she ran impetuously forward: he noticed the flying figure and jumped up and came to her side, the light of boyish affection on his face.

"Oh, child," she sobbed, "why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been in great distress. We have been searching for you all over the city!"

"Mother! . . . why did you seek for me? Did you not know that I would be in my Father's house?"

She looked at him strangely but the words seemed only a boy's simple direct explanation: he appeared unconscious of saying anything pointed or mysterious.

They learnt that he had been so engrossed with the stir and movement of the Temple that he had not noticed their departure, and finding them gone thought it safer to remain. A friendly priest had taken care of him until he could be claimed. It was said that he had greatly impressed the teachers not only by his winsome character but by his intelligence and knowledge of the scriptures.

On the journey home he was the same natural human boy, and Mary, after pondering long over the

words he had used, finally locked them away with other sayings in the inner chambers of her memory.

STUDENT AND CARPENTER

A year later Jesus was taken to the elders of the synagogue for formal examination in religious knowledge, and being satisfied with his attainments and character they pronounced him a "son of the Law," fit to take his place among the adult members, and a full member of the Jewish community. His boyhood was over.

In accordance with a wise racial custom it was incumbent on him to learn a trade whatever aim he had in view—the majority of the rabbis worked at trades—and naturally he went into the workshop of Joseph. The question of a profession was discussed. His intelligence and moral qualities pointed to the career of a scribe, what most ambitious parents wished their eldest sons to follow, for knowledge was the crown of life; but Joseph with a young family to provide for did not see how he could maintain him at the scribal college at Jerusalem, where the best scholars were taught.

In the absence of clear guidance nothing was done and Jesus settled down to the life of a working man, a matter which profoundly affected himself, and was of not less vital significance to the world. Had he proceeded to the theological school he would have occupied a position superior to the common people who formed the vast majority of humanity; he would have become a theological teacher, an ecclesiastical official, and the idea would have been emphasised and confirmed that in order to impart spiritual truth it was essential to undergo scholastic training. What happened was a blow at the policy which confined the free development

of the human spirit within regulated orders and privileged systems. Jesus had already begun to unwind the bonds which bound and crippled the minds of men.

In the shop Joseph was a careful and patient instructor, but it was a clear brain, a true eye, and a steady hand that made Jesus an apt apprentice. From looking after the glue and the tool-rack, handling the wood, sawing branches of sycamore, olive and cedar, and giving any help necessary, he advanced to more difficult tasks and so to work independently.

His leisure was given to self-culture. He learned Hebrew and, untrammelled by any rabbinical curriculum, roved through the worn roll of the Old Testament to which he had access. In time the spiritual thought and feeling of the masterpieces of literature which it contained were woven into the texture of his intellectual nature. Almost insensibly also he became familiar with spoken Greek, one of the languages in everyday use in Galilee, which brought him into closer contact with the men and women of the outer world.

He continued to attend the synagogue services which were a kind of religious school for the people, for not only were the Law and the prophets read and prayers recited but expositions of the scriptures were given, followed often by doctrinal discussions. Jesus noted that the final appeal was always to tradition, a fact which sent him back to the original text of scripture and to deep pondering on ultimate truth.

Much of his time was spent on the hills—his Father's larger house. Every month brought its own interest. January began with sunshine and storm, when ploughing and sowing went on from dawn to late afternoon: this was the season when Joseph was busiest supplying and repairing the simple implements used by the peasantry. Soon a delicate greenness tinted the earth, to

which a vivid touch was given by the brilliant red of the anemones, and at intervals a cold wind from the Lebanon range blew over the town.

The grain grew apace and the hillsides became ablaze with blossom and flower. Early and late the people scanned the sky for indications of the weather, especially noting the wind, for if it came from the west it would bring the latter rain showers which would sweeten the ground and advance the crops, if from the east it would blight and ruin them like the blast from an open oven. These were the months when morning and evening were perfect in their cool and fragrant beauty.

When May arrived Jesus took part in the work of the barley and wheat harvests, when all available men, women and children were in the fields reaping; and then watched the threshing, the winnowing the chaff from the grain and the storing. After this nature began to look dishevelled and tired and when the blue ranunculus wilted and faded he knew that summer had arrived: with it came fierce, exhausting heat burning up the vegetation, baking and blistering the earth, and enervating mind and body.

In November the early winter rains began to fall in sheets, soaking the earth and rendering it once more soft for the plough. Hail and snow, accompanied by thunder-storms, followed at intervals.

On occasions when the workshop was closed, or when work took them abroad, Joseph would linger on the hillcrest and point out to Jesus the geographical and historical background of the landscape. Away over the undulating country to the north-east, sixty miles distant, Mount Hermon stood out, snow-clad, snow-white, against the blue of the sky. Those tiny specks clinging to the eaves of a nearer height were the houses

of Safad. On the east was the deep gorge of the Jordan cleaving the land in two, with the dim mountains of trans-Jordania beyond—a wonderful country, Joseph said, of valleys, forests, and endless corn and pasture lands—and in the foreground the round summit of Tabor. On the south was the plain of Esdraelon, the scene of a score of battles, with Endor and Nain and Jezreel, and in the distance the hills of Samaria and the twin peaks of Ebal and Gerizim. The horizon to the south-east was blocked by the long dark wall of Carmel which dipped into the Mediterranean. The west was occupied with rolling hill-country dotted with hamlets connected by bridle-paths which carried the eye down to the sea with its edge of white where it beat upon the sands.

Sometimes he went farther afield, at first with Joseph and Mary, later by himself. The region of the Lake drew him most. He would set out in the early morning, pass over the rim of the hills into uneven country, wide green valleys broken by grey rocky hillocks, and along the winding road, blinding white beneath a hot cloudless sky, until, twenty miles from Nazareth, he came to the crest and looked down upon a wonder-scene of beauty, a quiet sheet of water lying deep among the ancient hills, its shining surface dotted with brown sailing boats, its shore-line fretted by hamlets and towns.

Then down from the breezy height through pasture land, fields of crops and orchards, into an airless atmosphere and a dry poignant heat, for the Lake was 680 feet below the level of the sea; past groves of palm, walnut, olive, and fig trees, across the plain of Gennesaret, a luxurious garden-region of tropical produce, to Bethsaida, then by thickets of brilliant oleanders festooned with convolvuli, and along the shore to Ca-

pernaum where Mary's sister lived. It stretched along the shore and up the slopes behind; the houses were built of black basalt or white limestone; near the beach a handsome synagogue, entirely of the latter stone, formed a conspicuous landmark from the water. On the east a stream came down from the hills, and two and a half miles further on the Jordan flowed silently into the Lake by a wide and shallow mouth.

The town was a busy industrial port, a fishing centre with many curing factories, boat-building yards and dyeing and tanning works. Being on the high road of trade from Damascus and the Far East to the factory towns on the coast, and on the border of Philip's territory, it was a customs collecting station, and a depôt for caravan travellers. A detachment of Roman troops was stationed in it.

Here he spent long days with his cousins, James and John, on the beach or amongst the fishing boats or on the rough hillsides. The Lake lured him with the spell of its charm and beauty. In all its phases and aspects it appealed to him. He loved it equally when it was quiet and clear and the shadows flitted over its surface, and when the storms broke and the waves dashed on the shore and the air was filled with the sound of many waters. The delicate purity and the glamour of the dawn, the shimmering glory of the noontide, the purple splendour of twilight, the glitter of the moonshine—these passed into his thought-life, and remained a haunting memory to brighten the duller days at Nazareth.

He now went regularly with Joseph to Jerusalem to attend the festivals, and formed friendships there which were among the happiest in his life. One was with a family at Bethany, a village two miles from the city, beyond the Mount of Olives, where the hill began to

dip down into the wilderness which stretched to the Dead Sea. The head of the house was Simon, a leper, but it was with his son Lazarus that Jesus became intimate, the two being constant companions during the feast days. There were also two daughters, Martha, the elder, who was of a sedate, serious and practical disposition, and Mary, more sensitive, contemplative, and mystical.

His association with this home made him familiar with the most attractive landscape on the Judean range. The slopes of Olivet were covered with gardens and plantations of olive and fig trees, and with free spaces thick with pine, cypress and palms: the summit was crowned with cedar groves. There were many sheltered walks and cool recesses into which one could escape from the dusty white road and the glare of the sun. Jesus and Lazarus came to know every corner of this pleasant ground, one of their favourite haunts being an olive orchard, called Gethsemane, belonging to a friend of the family.

As the years passed the divergence between himself and his companions became more marked. They adapted themselves to their environment, accepted their lot unthinkingly, became ordinary and commonplace units in the community. Jesus grew more thoughtful, more sensitive to the conditions about him, more conscious of the unsatisfactory character of life as it was lived by the majority. He had no greater immunity from the impact of human forces than they. His affections, his feelings, his desire to achieve and attain, the impulses of instinct, the appetites of the body, all contained for him, as for others, the elements of lawless action. Temptation surged upon him with the same insistence as it did upon all. Because of his finer nature, his keener sensibility, the fight was

all the fiercer, and he had to rally every power in his being to his help, the intellect to reason, the heart to repel, the will to control. Despite terrific onslaughts upon the citadels of his life he never gave way: his spirit remained in absolute mastery: he maintained an absolute obedience to the law of God. He did it not in virtue of super-normal strength, but because of the qualities which belonged to all, a clear apprehension of right and wrong, and an invincible resolution to do the right, supported by the spiritual resources of the Unseen. His experience made him one with all men and women, giving him a perfect understanding of their battles with self and evil, and infinite sympathy with them in their weakness and failures.

A feeling that he was somehow different from others stole at last into his consciousness. It was not only that he viewed life from another angle, had a deeper insight into its tangled character, enjoyed a clearer vision of the spiritual: there was something working within him which seemed to separate him from others and gave him a special place apart in the scheme of humanity. The realisation came not in an instant, not in a flash of intuition, with a rush of overwhelming emotion, but gradually as the dusk steals out of the dark and the dawn out of the dusk, dim, elusive, dream-like fancies, as of a pre-existence in some higher sphere, conscious gleams of inspiration, vivid revelations of the world's need, until a comprehension of his nature and mission possessed his mind. The process was the influence of the Divine educating and preparing him for his life work.

The knowledge braced and strengthened him, gave him an indefinable air of power and purpose, imparted a brighter glow to his thoughtful eyes. He moved more in the spirit, insensibly developing an appearance of de-

tachment as if he lived remote from the thoughts and interests of those around him. This made him something of a mystery to his younger brothers and sisters. They did not know—any more than himself—the circumstances of his birth, which had long since been forgotten by the neighbours, in whose eyes Mary had abundantly redeemed herself by her blameless wifehood and motherhood. He was the best of big brothers, loving, kind, and unselfish, and a strong refuge in their times of trouble. But he was so good that he irritated them; they felt in his presence a sense of inferiority, which, when out of humour with themselves, made them resent what seemed his perfection, the serenity which was never ruffled, the sweetness which was never shadowed.

The death of Joseph, his companion and guardian, made him master of the house and provider for the family. For years he was kept closely confined to the workshop, toiling with hammer and saw, and teaching silently by his cheerful acceptance of the conditions, steadfast endurance, and conscientious craftsmanship, the divine dignity of common labour. Many maidens, looking out on life with the soft glances of awakening womanhood, watched him covertly, noting his stalwart form, his refined face, his kind eyes, and the gentle and courteous manner in which he treated them. But he seemed to have none of the ordinary prepossessions of manhood, and in his presence, while sensible of his attractive personality, they were lifted above themselves and their emotions into a rarefied atmosphere, not cold or austere, but suffused with a spiritual glow in which they realised the mystical thrill of holy living.

Mary, for her part, watched him with a wistful, expectant gaze, seeking for signs of what her intuition told her was coming: occasionally she noticed little acts

which appeared to indicate a superhuman quality and made her heart leap. Jesus sometimes caught her deep ruminant look and smiled to her, but no words passed between them until he reached man's estate. Then one night she told him the story of John's birth, and of his own, quietly, with a lovely delicacy, but with a note of womanly pride, giving him quick glances to see how he took it. She saw the flash of wonder, the look of enlightenment, passing into infinite content. Then she knew that what she had said had confirmed and completed a process of revelation within himself.

When the night's moonshine had paled and the mists had risen and vanished he climbed, through the cool beauty of the dawn, to the rim of the hills. She saw him go and saw him return. What occurred on the hilltop she did not know, but she noticed, almost with a pang, a subtle change in him: he was like a being transformed and she felt as if a gulf had opened between them and he was no longer her son. But there was no change in his attitude; he continued to show her an exquisite gentleness and deference, and a reverence which was new in the relations of men and women.

So both waited in patience and confidence the hour of action, which John, the herald, would signify by his appearance.

Jesus knew something of John. He had occasionally met him on his visits to Jerusalem, a grave, taciturn young man, for whom he developed a warm affection and admiration. Zacharias and Elizabeth had not forced their son into the priestly office, and were content that he should, like Jesus, be self-taught and self-trained. He grew up into a man of strong and rugged character so out of sympathy with the corrupt state of religious life in Judea that when his parents died he threw off the conventions as well as the restraints of

civilisation and sought the wild country on the edge of the Jordan valley, where he lived like a solitary essene in cave-cells or wandered among the gullies and precipices, his sole neighbours the shepherds and goatherds, his dress only a camel's-hair cloak girt with a girdle of untanned sheepskin, and his food chiefly locusts, dried and baked in the sun, and wild rock honey.

Jesus had not heard of him since.

A VISION OF THE WORLD

Ten years passed of intensive preparation along various lines of study and enlightenment. Regular attendance at the synagogue and the festivals at Jerusalem made him intimately familiar with the real nature of Judaism and the relation of the people towards it. With maturer mind and deeper spiritual insight he went again into the historical development of the race. All the glory of it vanished and he saw the process in its stark reality, the selfish aggrandisement, the barbarous conflicts, the isolated national existence, the proud contempt for other nations, the hardening of the moral life into a system of formal piety and ritualistic practice centred in a Temple bloodstained with sacrificial slaughter—all interpenetrated with incomparable thought and endeavour, incredible heroism of soul, knowledge of the true God and unquenchable confidence in a divine purpose guiding the race to some unknown but splendid end—a marvellous but sorrowful career, like some noble river issuing from the wilds, and, after threading much difficult country, interspersed with quiet green spaces, losing itself at last in futile reaches of stagnant marsh, where the only gleam of light and colour was some solitary blossom or the flash of a dragon-fly's wings.

He also sought more intimate association with the people in village and town, and realised how ignorant and superstitious they were and yet how faithful to their poor ideals: how sordid and drab and dull their lives and oppressed by haunting dread of the unknown, and yet how content and cheerful they managed to be: how much they suffered from illness and disease, and yet how patient and uncomplaining they were in their endurance. A visit to the hot baths on the lake shore revealed a little world of broken lives, men, women and children, worn and wasted, the victims of ignorance or stupidity or sin; and these carried his thoughts out to the larger world in which the same conditions prevailed until it seemed as if the earth were only a gigantic palace of pain.

From passing foreigners and pilgrims he learnt something of pagan regions, not only within the wide sphere of the Roman Empire, but further off, India, China, Africa, Spain, to the utmost bounds of the known earth; and of the lives and faiths of the peoples, a strange medley of good and evil, the good the result of that continuous revelation of truth which came through man's highest powers, and the evil of the uncontrolled indulgence of his lower instincts. Dim and uncertain as the knowledge was it gave him an idea of the trend of thought throughout the ages and what men were still thinking. He learnt of India's speculative travail and of the moral reform inaugurated by Buddha and his lofty doctrines; of Zoroaster, that other eastern reformer; of Confucius, the ancient sage of the furthest east; of the beliefs in the centres of western culture, the mystery religions with their secret rites, the schools of Greek philosophy, as well as of those darker cults which deified men and worshipped indecency and practised vileness indescribable.

So there developed in his mind a vision of the world naked to its shrunken soul and tragic in its forlorn helplessness, a world of infinite possibilities for health and beauty and peace and yet full of wretchedness and suffering and unavailing sorrow, with its undying aspiration and moral failure and despair; its violence and cruelty and lust, pride and luxury; patient toil and servitude and poverty; its longing and feeling for better things, its nobility and self-sacrifice, and its sensuous worship and loose and selfish pursuit of pleasure: its craving for immortality and its pessimism and materialism; and through it all, like the continuous sighing of the wind in the darkness, the sobbing of women and little children—a satiated, dissatisfied, and wearied world.

The shadow of a sadness fell upon his spirit which was never afterwards to lift. Laughter left him—how could he laugh when always before his spiritual vision there was that piteous picture of a sad and sin-enmeshed world? But his smile was all the sweeter and more tender because of his knowledge and understanding; his pity all the deeper for every form of weakness and ignorance and failure; his love all the more personal and active for every human creature however repulsive and base. . . .

That world needed no political potentate, or military colossus, who would strut through a petty hour of blood and triumph and then vanish into the abyss. Nor did it need a master of learning who would expound the philosophy of the universe or the constitution of matter, or the solution of economic and industrial problems, or the principles underlying art. These things did not touch its essential life; they left unaffected its spiritual state. They were appropriate to the intellectual sphere and it was the privilege of man to en-

lighten himself regarding them as he evolved. To inform him, out of season, regarding the origin and physical history of the earth, the processes that shaped it into being, the vast geological epochs, the eras of gigantic beasts, the growth of thought and intelligence, the lives of the aboriginal cave-dwellers, would be to offer to an infant the knowledge and experience of an adult: it would be inverting the natural evolution of mind and interfering with the Divine scheme.

What then was to be the nature of his mission? Truth had always shone about men and women and within them, simple and clear, and independent of mental development and the progress of knowledge. It was not his to announce any departure from normal law or introduce any new system of salvation, but to reveal the character of those spiritual forces which had always been governing their lives. To do this, teaching would be necessary—but the world had listened to many teachers and yet the truth had remained despised and disobeyed. What it needed was not new truth but a new interpretation of the old by a teacher who would speak with an authority which none could question. It was this kind of authority that had hitherto been lacking in the faiths of all nations.

Now for the first time they were to hear the voice of one speaking with the absolute authority of the Almighty Himself. They were to see an incarnation of the Divine light and wisdom; the spirit of truth manifest in the flesh. Jesus was to be God's evangelist who would proclaim to the world once for all the principles of His Kingdom. He was the Person for whom all men had been longing; the soul of the Unseen and spiritual coming to the rescue of the soul of the seen and material, the one infinitely free, the other confined and fettered within prison bars.

His message would seem nothing and yet it would be everything. He had to tell them of the real nature of God, that He was a Father, personal to every human soul and needing no intermediary, no priest, to stand between Him and His children; who loved them with a love ten thousand times more pitiful and strong than the love of parents for their children; of the simple but tremendous power and virtue of the love and the law which He had ordained to govern their existence, that wonderful love-law which dimly adumbrated what obtained in the spiritual world; which, if obeyed, ensured health and happiness and peace, and if disobeyed involved moral and physical weakness and disorder. He had to make them realise that the Kingdom of God was not a thing founded on material force but a spiritual state, one actually within their own nature and evincing itself in love of God and love of each other; to combat and destroy the popular belief that schemes of salvation and creeds and ritual were the way to felicity on earth and passwords to a heaven of bliss. He had to create the idea that this heaven men and women desired was located in their own life and was a present condition. Also that the soul was supreme and until it conquered they would never have satisfaction or rest for mind or body nor peace and good-will between communities and nations.

That was the good news of which he was to be the bearer from God to man.

It became clear to him why he had been born into the Jewish race and why his message must be to them in the first place. The conditions of thought and life in Greece and Rome would pass away; they were but temporary phases of belief; so also the superstitions of the heathen nations; they would dissolve and disappear. There would be no sense in purifying wells that were

going to be disused. But the Jews had, of all others, travelled farthest along the pathway of spiritual apprehension; they were monotheists, believing in the Supreme Reality and in His moral law, obedience to which, they had discovered, was the secret of life and the foundation of happiness. True, it was but a blurred vision they had of God and His system and of the further path by which they ought to advance. Yet while they had missed much the fact remained that they had come nearest to the heart of the Eternal, and were naturally the people to whom God was looking to extend His truth. They were, in His sight, the strategic race with all the qualities needed to be His missionaries and evangelists in the world. They were actually anticipating the advent of one whom, if he brought credentials from Heaven, they would rally round in force and fight under for the establishment of a world-wide Kingdom of righteousness.

This advanced position held its dangers. It was always coldest on the highest peaks. The more enlightened a people were, or thought they were, the more difficult it was to influence them; the proudest and stiffest minds were those who believed their doctrines and practices to be the last word in revelation; the most inflexible opponents of progress were those whose vested privileges, secured to them by centuries of possession, were threatened. What would make his task more difficult still was the twisted nature of their expectations. Their messiah, they believed, would not teach—he would rule; and assuredly they would have no use for one who came to them as Jesus would come, an unprofessional teacher in a peasant's dress, not to govern but to serve, not to fight but to advocate peace, simplicity, humility and purity. They had as a whole little desire for a purely spiritual Kingdom in which

they would be in a state of real and living correspondence with God; what they wanted chiefly, as the jealous custodians of God's truth, was national independence and wide-world ecclesiastical dominion.

With what wisdom he would need to speak and act! He would require to make allowance for the ignorance and shallowness and imperfection of the human mind. To propose drastic reforms in matters of outward observance would be folly. He would have to recognise and acquiesce in their religious customs as well as submit himself to their rites. But these were of little moment, for it was their thought that needed transmutation more than their practice. If their souls were freed their bodies also would escape from bondage. As he sat watching the corn growing and thought of the slow secret process by which it developed, first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear, he learnt the lesson of it. He would never change the religious and social conditions of the world at once. He would have to drop spiritual seed-thoughts here and there into people's minds and let the process of growth and expansion go on by itself until the whole world was transformed.

In what form could he best present his message? To make it intelligible he would have to walk with them in the path of their own thought and adopt the language they understood. But the undeveloped language of earth was so pitifully incapable of conveying the high ideas of the spiritual world! It would nevertheless be impossible to use any other; he would have to speak as they spoke, refer to incidents and events in their past history, use local illustrations with which they were familiar despite the earthly associations that clung to them. Most important of all he

would have to relate, as far as he consistently could, references and promises in their scriptures to himself. Withal he would have to express his message in a manner that would not become unintelligible in future ages. Often he would have to draw on the eternal order of nature to express his meaning and wrap up his truths in parable and picture-stories that would never become out of date. There was always the possibility that he would be misunderstood and that those who reported his sayings would put their own construction on them and distort their simple import.

But none of these things moved him to anxiety or misgiving: he faced the future with perfect calm and trust.

THE HERALD

While patiently waiting that call which he knew would come he was not oblivious of the trend of political feeling and public developments. For many years the national life had been singularly quiet, only an occasional local outbreak disturbing the normal course of affairs, but beneath the surface ran a strong current of dissatisfaction. Apart from other deep-seated causes of unrest there was acute resentment among the Jews at the excessive civil taxation which bore heavily upon all classes in the shape of income tax, import and export duties, a tariff on all commodities bought and sold, and other imposts. These were in addition to their own levies for the Temple, education, health, and similar purposes.

Only Philip in the quieter districts to the north-east of Galilee was at peace with his people. But these were largely Syrian and Greek. In Judea the latest

procurator was Pontius Pilate, a Roman citizen, a strong and able man, and ruthless as of necessity he had to be in so difficult a position—perhaps, on account of the character of the population, the most difficult in the Empire. He despised the Jews and was feared and hated in turn, but as a rule he acted cautiously, for any complaint regarding his administration to the Emperor might mean his dismissal and ruin.

Herod Antipas still ruled in Galilee and Peræa, continuing to hold the favour of Rome despite his local unpopularity. For his policy was to break down the exclusive attitude of the Jews and absorb them into the Imperial system, and he used all the means which a crafty and cruel nature could devise to effect his purpose. He had a passion for building and had been busy rearing superb palaces and forts and cities throughout his territory. One of his most important enterprises was the construction of a new capital to supersede Sepphoris, north of Nazareth.

The site he chose was a level stretch of shore on the western side of the Lake close to the hot baths and dominated by a basaltic crag projecting from the hillside. Some old tombs were swept away by the contractors, and Herod was plainly told that the Jews would not live in the place since they would be ceremonially defiled if they did so. He brushed the objection aside and an imposing range of marble buildings had been completed, along with a magnificent palace and castle on the black rock commanding the city and the Lake. Tiberias, as Herod named it, after the Emperor, was one of the wonders of Palestine; it was exempt from taxation and enjoyed other special privileges, but its earliest citizens scarcely upheld the dignity and splendour of its appearance. Orthodox Jews resolutely refused to enter it; a few outcasts did so,

but the main body of its inhabitants were a mixed crowd of aliens and it had already acquired an evil reputation for gaiety and dissoluteness.

This was not surprising for the Court set the example. Herod's corrupt life was a public scandal. He had become entangled in an intrigue with Herodias, the wife of his brother Herod Philip, who was a private citizen of Rome; she was an ambitious woman of a restless and passionate nature who loved position and power, and made an easy conquest of Herod for whom she deserted her husband. He arranged to marry her and divorce his own wife, a daughter of Aretas, a powerful Arabian, whose territory adjoined Peræa, but she, hearing of the project, quietly slipped off to her father. Herodias, with her daughter Salome, not yet twenty years of age, was now installed in the palace at Tiberias. So serious an offence against their Law incensed the Jews, and it was a source of secret satisfaction to them that Aretas, bent on avenging the slight on his house, was preparing to attack Herod on the borders of Peræa.

In the midst of these events, when Jesus was about thirty years old, there came to Nazareth rumours of a preacher who had suddenly appeared in the northern valley of the Jordan, at the fords, and was attracting crowds. The Nazarenes were interested. As keen politicians and strong nationalists they were always ready to join any popular movement of opposition to the ruling powers. Was the man a loyalist, a reformer? they asked. Had he a following? What was his mission?

Further reports raised a feeling of curiosity and even of wonder. He was akin to the old type of prophet which the nation had not known for centuries, whose spirit had been quenched by the rise of official religion

—what use, their leaders had said, was there for fresh inspiration when all the Law, and all the truth, had already been revealed? Nothing was needed now save to interpret the statutes they had. Revelation had been swamped by legalism.

If this, then, was a prophet it marked a departure in religious thought and method. Could he be the messiah? The accounts seemed to indicate it. In his dress he was like a hermit and ascetic, and in his teaching he struck a note wholly unlike that which characterised the theology of the rabbis. He was denouncing the evil conditions of the time and warning people that a new era of moral and spiritual life was imminent.

Later news made it clear that a mass movement had set in: people from Judea and Galilee of all classes, even military men, police, college students, and priests were making for the Jordan to hear the new voice. The Nazarenes were busy, but could no longer restrain their curiosity and a number set off for the fords. On their return they were eagerly questioned.

"He is different from our own teachers," they declared, "he is more like an essene, but he is not clad in white: he wears a camel's-hair coat. And how he talks! His preaching is like a sharp sword, and he calls on us to repent of our real sins of heart and mind and adopt a new way of life."

"What sort of new way?"

"We have to be kind and pure and honest and humble—otherwise we cannot belong to the new Kingdom that is coming."

"A new way in truth!" said a bystander, with a grimace.

"Yes, our religious folk do not like him for he attacks them equally with us and makes all out to be sin-

ners. I heard him call them a generation of vipers! He was standing among the shingle on the bank of the river. 'You think you are free from condemnation because you are Jews,' he cried. 'Why, God is able, even out of these stones, to create Jews. You are like the useless trees which the woodcutters yonder are cutting up for firewood: every one of you that does not bear good fruit will be hewn down and cast into the fire!'"

"Fire is his strong point," said another, with a shudder, "he drew a picture of worthless men being burned in unquenchable flames!"

"Is he seducing many?"

"Very many, and he indicates their conversion by dipping them bodily in the waters of the Jordan: it is a sign of their cleansing and of admission into a new life."

"Many men from our parts have made confession," added another. "I saw Simon and Andrew and James and John, the fishers from the lake, haunting the spot. Some, in fact, are wondering whether he is not the messiah."

Jesus, who had been standing by listening, asked quietly:

"What is this man's name?"

"His name is John."

"Does he speak of a greater than he?"

"Aye, he says he is only a forerunner, and that one mightier by far is coming whose slave he is not worthy to be—a great one assuredly!—and that this one will baptise us not with water but with fire."

"Fire again: a baptism of fire!" some one muttered. A thrill passed through the group. Was there an underlying significance in the phrase: did it foreshadow

a revolt against the Roman sovereignty? Or that Divine judgment on the nation on account of its sins and its purification which the apocalyptic writers had been prophesying?

Jesus turned away: he had received the call. Even as he walked back to the house he felt that he had left his Nazareth life behind: he had a sense of already being infinitely remote from the scenes and interests about him. When he told his mother that he was going to see John she also realised that his time had come. She did not think of herself, she was only glad for him that his weary years of waiting were over.

He made his simple preparations. To the younger members of the family, now grown up, he committed his mother. His financial affairs were adjusted: he had been careful and thrifty, and, despite the calls of the household, had been able to save what would be sufficient for all his needs for some years: the bulk of this he deposited in a way that made it possible to obtain it on call. His arrangements were made without stir, or indication of anxiety or fear, so quietly, so smilingly, that in the home that night there was nothing but perfect calm.

He left with the dawn when the air was sweet and fresh and the dew was glittering on the olive and pomegranate leaves, and the birds were twittering sleepily about the housetops. Mary accompanied him down to the white road, across which the long shadows lay clear and sharp. As she looked with a mother's pride upon his face, so strong, so serene, and into his eyes so unutterably pure and fearless, she realised as in a flash the wonder of his nature, and for the first time there came into her regard for him a sense of worship. . . .

She watched him, shading her eyes with her hand,

as he moved away with long, even strides, resolute and purposeful. When he reached the bend of the hill he turned for a moment, and seeing her still standing in the shadow, waved her farewell. Her hand went swiftly to her bosom as if she had experienced a stab of pain.

What was he going out to? What would be the end of it all? Glory or shame? An ignoble death, or the conquest of the world?

III: THE STORY OF THE GALILEE DAYS

Jesus made His first public appearance in the ancient stronghold of religion on the Judean hills, but His early ministry was chiefly spent in the quiet and beautiful region of Galilee, where the more liberal and receptive character of the people provided the best opportunity for effective work. Apart from preaching and healing He trained a small body of men to act as missionary exponents of His new way of life. His extraordinary powers created popular commotion, whilst His revolutionary teaching excited the alarm and stirred up the opposition of the official professors and guardians of the orthodox faith.

THROUGH THE FIERY FURNACE

Jesus walked quietly down to the plain, a solitary figure with an air of distinction which made the wayfarers he met turn and look at him. He was tall, somewhat spare in build, and moved with the easy grace and freedom of perfect health.

His features were regular and clear-cut, his complexion a soft olive, and his eyes dark and penetrating. It was a face which gave the impression of power and strength, but there was also an element of gentleness which softened the firm outlines, and a smiling kindness behind the keen gaze. He had no beard and his hair was short. His costume was the simple one of the time: over his tunic was draped a finely-woven robe of linen which was fastened with a girdle: on his head he wore a turban: his feet were shod with light sandals.

He made his way through the fields, green with the shoots of the new crops, and along the roads, crowded with traffic, down into the Jordan valley, glowing in the incandescent sunlight—it was the lowest and one of the hottest depressions in the world.

On the by-paths shaded by the tall palm trees he fell in with travellers bound for the same destination, and others returning, the latter full of their experiences and ready to talk. These directed him to the exact locality of the preaching station, but it was easily found for people were converging to it from all quarters. The scene had the appearance of a gigantic fair.

Jesus saw John on the bank of the river, a prophet indeed in dress and style, and stood watching him baptising the converts. In an interval of quiet he took the opportunity of approaching him.

John's attention was instantly arrested by the tall graceful figure, the dignity of bearing and beauty of expression, which were so unusual; and looking more closely he recognised his kinsman of whose spirituality of character he had heard. He was taken aback.

"Why do you come to me?" he exclaimed, "I need rather to be baptised by you."

"Nay," replied Jesus gently, "allow me also to go through the ceremony: it is right that I should submit to whatever customs are helpful."

He moved down into the swiftly running water, John following, and was immersed. For a moment both were silent from deep feeling. Then to John it seemed as if the air had parted above them and the Unseen become visible, and the glory of it were playing about the head of Jesus; and as if a voice—was it a voice?—were saying in a language he understood:

"This is my Son, this is my beloved, in whom is my delight."

John was startled and awestruck: it was the revelation he had been expecting and waiting for. Jesus, his own kinsman, was the messiah whose advent he had been proclaiming. The Son of God! Not in the common sense: not simply a good and gifted man, but the Son of God in reality—it was a tremendous status. And why should it not be so?

Had not his instinct indicated it? Did it not justify his mission? And the something flame-like he thought he had seen—was it not a shape similar to a dove? And was not the dove the symbol of peace, and purity, and beauty? And did this not point to the special character of the new Kingdom?

And yet a village carpenter to undertake the task of saving the world! The idea made John's strong mind reel. Surely it was a visionary, an impossible, thing!

For Jesus the experience marked another stage in the progressive revelation of His relation to God. It was a definite announcement of His Divine affinity consecrating Him for the work He had to do. But immeasurably strengthened though He was He felt He could not enter upon His mission without a time for reflection and preparation. He had to rediscover Himself, to adjust Himself to the revelation, to arrange His thoughts and plan His methods.

He moved at once away from the river and the crowds up into the savage and sterile tracts that formed the precipitous walls of the Jordan rift. For several weeks He lived amongst the high crags and gorges, where the eagle had its home and scorpions and vipers lurked, His only neighbours the shepherds and goatherds, or an occasional outlaw; these, being familiar with the presence of solitary ascetics, though not one of such saint-like nature, supplied Him with food.

During the glittering sun-drenched days He sat in

the shade of the rocks looking down on the valley and the river and the roadway with its dusty traffic, and hearing the tinkle of the camel bells; at night, after the purple shadows had faded into the clear starlight, He moved quietly about, meditating in a silence and loneliness unbroken save by the shrilling of crickets, the cry of a jackal or hyena, or the echoing roar of lions from the Jordan jungle.

He was now conscious of a closer link with the Unseen: new spiritual forces were surging within Him: He felt a mysterious accession to His normal power and with it a sublimation of the spirit and a clearer vision of the task given into His hands to accomplish. Such a mood of exaltation held its perils for so highly sensitive a nature, and it was inevitable that He should experience them. They came in the form of temptation, or the swift inclination to give way to lower impulses, which could usually back up its appeal by plausible reasons.

Once when He had been without food for a time and had become faint from bodily exhaustion the thought flashed into His mind:

"If I am the Son of God I should possess power over the laws of nature and life as yet unknown to men and I ought to be able to turn these stones into bread to appease my hunger."

There seemed to be no harm in doing this; was it not within His prerogative? His need also was great. But it was the impulse of sense, the pull of the flesh, the downward drag of the lower life.

No! it would be a lack of faith in God's care of Him, a misuse of His powers, a surrender to the appetite of the body: He recalled a phrase in the scriptures, an echo of the wisdom of the past, and He addressed it to Himself:

" 'Man does not live by bread alone.' "

It was not the only temptation that assailed Him. As He planned out the lines of His work and realised the difficulties He would meet there stole into His mind the thought how easy it would be for Him to begin in such a public and striking way as to attract unusual attention and make His claim good:

"Being the Son of God I could ascend one of the high towers of the Temple during one of the festivals and leap down into the midst of the crowd of worshippers, and, by escaping unhurt, demonstrate that I possess Divine power."

Not without a struggle was the attractive suggestion stifled. But that was not God's way of approach to humanity—not by spectacular feats, but by the still small voice of love, reason and conscience—and God's way was best.

On another occasion as He sat gazing across the valley towards the opposite heights His imagination wandered far beyond the corn and pasture lands, the vineries and forests, the sea and the yellow desert, and there came to Him a vision of the world and all its glory; the pomp and magnificence of Rome, the intellectual culture of Greece, the luxurious civilisation of Egypt, the opulent splendours of the Orient, and the possibilities of the outer barbaric regions as yet unexplored and unknown. Were not all these within His grasp to control and command if He only used His power? He might become the Emperor of the world: not for selfish ends but for its own salvation; He could destroy all warring factions, establish liberty and peace, and transform it into a Kingdom ruled by just and inflexible law.

Ah! it would be only adopting the old devices and using material agencies, sword and edict and ritual, to

salve and satisfy the human soul. It would be bowing down before the forces of the world and worshipping evil. Never by that way would mankind enter into its kingdom of happiness and rest.

So His spirit passed unscathed through the fiery furnace of temptation.

When He returned to the Jordan He found a larger gathering and the excitement more intense as a result of the increased earnestness and urgency of John's preaching. The whole country was talking of the movement and men were swarming to see and hear for themselves. The ecclesiastical leaders at Jerusalem, whose duty it was to guide the religious life of the people and guard them from false doctrines and from agitators who might create political trouble, had met in council and dispatched a picked deputation to enquire into the proceedings and to report. These were in the throng surrounding John, and Jesus heard them questioning him.

They asked him who he was. Was he the messiah?

"No," he replied emphatically. "I am not."

"Who then? Elijah whom we expect to come again?"

"I am not."

"Are you the prophet of whom our scriptures foretell?"

"No."

"Then," they continued with some irritation, "who are you? We are here to find out and we must take back a report."

"I am only a voice in the wilderness proclaiming One who is to come, and preparing His path."

"What right then have you to baptise?"

John at this moment caught a glimpse of Jesus stand-

ing grave and interested. He raised his voice which rang out strong and clear in the quiet air:

"I indeed baptise with water, but standing unknown amongst you is the One of whom I spoke: One, who coming after me will be preferred before me, whose sandal-thongs even I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose."

Startled and impressed they looked curiously round. No sign came from Jesus; it was not a moment to declare Himself. They saw only common people listening with open mouths. A sceptical laugh broke from them and shrugging their shoulders they moved off.

Next day when John was preaching he saw Jesus advancing towards him.

"See," he cried, "there is the Lamb of God who has come to save the world."

It was a figure of speech peculiarly appropriate at the moment when men's thoughts were beginning to turn to the passover festival. The sacrifice of the lamb there meant much to them; it symbolised freedom from bondage, forgiveness, life. What was this new thing that John spoke of? They looked eagerly at the tall figure with the quiet reserved face and saw only a citizen of Galilee whom some of them knew as a carpenter. Either the prophet was in error or they had mistaken the one to whom he had pointed.

Amongst those who heard the announcement were a number of young fishermen from the Lake of Galilee. Curiosity rooted in religious feeling had drawn them from their occupation for a day or two and they had become ardent disciples of John. They included two brothers, Simon, a married man, and Andrew; and the two cousins of Jesus, James and John, who were partners with Simon in the fishing business; all four of the

best type of their class, capable, honest, serious-minded. They looked at each other in surprise: surely, they also thought, there must be some strange misconception on the part of John. And yet . . .

Ere they could make up their minds to act Jesus had disappeared.

Next afternoon when the fierce heat had somewhat allayed Jesus appeared again. Standing beside the prophet were the two Lake men Andrew and John.

"See," cried the preacher eagerly, "there He is; there is the Lamb of God."

"But that is Jesus of Nazareth," they said in obvious perplexity.

"He is my cousin," added John the Galilean.

"And my kinsman also," answered the prophet, "but," vehemently, "I tell you He is the real Son of God: He is the messiah."

The two men followed Jesus, doubtful and shy. Jesus turned, and smilingly saluting them asked what they desired.

Neither could find words to reply; it was Jesus, certainly, but not the Jesus of Nazareth whom they had known; there was an indefinable power and dignity in the familiar face, an unaccountable light in the smiling eyes, which confused and awed them.

"Teacher," one blurted out, unconsciously using the common term of respect, "where are you staying?"

"Come and see," said Jesus in a way which in itself was an invitation.

They walked on together to a house in the neighbouring village, and in the cool of the evening they sat and listened to speech such as they had never heard in their lives. What He said had no relation to the Law or ritual but dealt with matters that struck at the roots of the world order, and the language was as simple

and unconventional as their own and yet wonderful in its clarity and force.

Andrew could not contain himself: early in the morning he sought out his brother.

"Simon, Simon! We have met the messiah."

"The messiah!" was the incredulous response. "Where is he?"

"Come and see."

He took him to Jesus, who, scanning the sturdy form and noting the strong face, lined and weatherbeaten like rock, said with a smile:

"Simon, your name ought to be Cephas."

Cephas was Aramaic and equivalent to the Greek Petros or Peter, signifying a piece of rock. The name was so apt that "Peter" he became to his friends, though Jesus loved the old "Simon," and continued as a rule to use it.

A message from His mother reminded Jesus of a wedding in Cana to which the family had been invited, and, leaving John to continue his work, He set out for Galilee, accompanied by the four fishers. At a village on the way Andrew and Simon met a fellow-townsman named Philip, another seeker after light, and stopped to speak to him. Jesus heard his eager questions and saw the sudden surprise and glance which he turned upon Him. He met it with the simple invitation "Follow Me," and so magnetic was the look and so magical the virtue of the voice that he was drawn unhesitatingly into the circle.

"Nathanael of Cana is with me," he said. "I must find him," and he hurried off and into the presence of his friend.

"We have found the messiah! He has come at last!"

"Where? Who is He?"

"Jesus of Nazareth!"

Nathanael scoffed. "Nazareth!" he said. The town was the next one to Cana; there was jealous rivalry between the two and each affected contempt for the other. He threw out his hands and spoke with ironic humour. "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?"

"Come and see," replied the practical Philip and took him to Jesus.

"Here," said Jesus, "is an Israelite in whom there is no guile."

Nathanael was astonished: not so much at the complimentary implication of goodness as at the fact that Jesus appeared to know him.

"How are you acquainted with me?" he asked.

"Before Philip went to see you when"—meaningly—"you were under the fig tree, I saw you."

Nathanael stared, for it was not possible for Jesus to have seen him at his private devotions. This, assuredly, was a man with spiritual long-sight.

"Teacher," he faltered, "you must of a truth be the messiah, the King of Israel, the Son of God."

"You believe because I said that? You will see other and greater things in connection with the Son of Man"—emphasising the human title in contradistinction to those used by Nathanael, which were the terms commonly applied to the expected deliverer of the nation.

It was after sunset when they arrived at Cana, a village on the hillside covered with sycomores, olives and pomegranates, and possessing a clear-running spring; and the wedding festivities were proceeding. Jesus washed His hands at the stone vessels outside the reception room, and, entering, found His mother and brothers. Mary was disconcerted when she heard of the others who accompanied Him, for the stock of re-

freshments was now limited, but they were invited in and took their places in the dining-room which was decorated and illuminated.

"The wine is finished." It was a whisper to Mary. She caught the anxiety underlying the words and understood: to admit a deficiency of wine would be to admit a lack of hospitality and bring shame on the house. She thought a moment. Something of what had occurred at the Jordan had reached her ears and she reasoned that if Jesus had begun His work He would be accompanying it with "signs," the mark of every true prophet.

Jesus saw her approaching with a half-wistful, half-deprecatory look.

"They have no wine," she said, "the supply is now done."

He looked up at her understandingly and with a gleam of humour in His kind eyes.

"Mother," He replied, in a tone caressing in its tenderness—"Mother, do you not know that things are different now?"

He sensed the sudden chill and taking her into His confidence as of old added:

"I am not yet ready: my hour has not yet come."

He had not refused her suggestion and her instinct told her that something would happen. Confidently she went to the servants and said:

"Whatever Jesus tells you to do, do it without question."

Shortly afterwards He rose and made His way out to the porch. Pointing to the water-pots He said to the servants:

"Empty these and put in fresh water."

They cleared out the jars and bringing water from the spring filled them up to the brim.

"Take some of the water now to the steward." The steward was the man who supervised the arrangements and looked after the food and the wine.

They did so. The water was red like wine, but it was wine which had never been trodden out of grapes or gone through the process of fermentation or bottled in goatskins: it was not wine, but wine-like water so superior in its taste to grape wine that the steward exclaimed in surprise to the bridegroom:

"Why, what is this? You have reversed the usual custom and kept back the best liquor until we have drunk freely."

The bridegroom was equally amazed. Enquiry elicited how the wine had been obtained, and a hubbub of excited talk arose. One or two imagined that a kind of trick had been performed, but Mary smiled happily to herself. At last she was going to be vindicated and her faith justified.

Those most deeply impressed and moved were the little band who had attached themselves to Jesus; the strange occurrence confirmed their belief that He had been endowed with special power, for to them it was a "miracle," something outside the province of natural law. They were unaware that it was the most natural thing in the world for one of superior knowledge to be able to manipulate raw matter. It was their attitude that was remarkable—the assumption that there was no higher law capable of controlling the lower processes of existence. "Miracles" were but veiled truth.

They resolved to become His disciples, but first they must return to their homes to arrange their affairs. They told Jesus and He said He would accompany them. There was yet a week or two before the passover at Jerusalem which He desired to attend as usual,

and meanwhile He would take His mother and brothers and sisters to the Lake, where they would enjoy a quiet holiday and be together on the old footing for the last time.

They went to Capernaum, where with more experienced eyes He renewed His acquaintance with the scenes He loved. He sauntered observantly about the streets and wharves and along the paved highway thronged with strings of camels laden with the rich wares of the Orient, and sailed with the fishing fleet to the mouths of the rivers and streams where the biggest catches were obtained. On the water the whole extent of the Lake and its surroundings opened out before Him: the northern towns backed by the Naphtali hills, with the houses of Safad gleaming high on their crest, and snow-white Hermon beyond the cleft of the Jordan valley: the Greek villages and towns scattered about the eastern ranges: along the western shore continuous clusters of settlements, the Roman aqueduct, and the great city of Tiberias rising seemingly out of the water, and above it the black walls and battlements of Herod's castle.

Nature and art combined to make the scene one of singular beauty, but it was a beauty not altogether wholesome. The fresh winds that swept across Galilee passed high above the Lake, leaving its atmosphere still and stifling and charged with molten heat. Swamps with their disease-carrying mosquitoes were numerous along the coast and malaria was common. Capernaum and Bethsaida had an open southern exposure and obtained the benefit of whatever breeze was blowing, but sickness and suffering were rife there as elsewhere.

Jesus found the people in these Lake towns simple, frank, independent and brave; their association with

the Greek and Roman life and thought of the neighbourhood had rubbed off many of their racial peculiarities and they were less afraid of innovation and progress. For the quiet opening of a spiritual ministry the district could not be surpassed.

But first—Jerusalem.

THE NIGHT WIND

Taking John the Galilean and other adherents with Him He left for Jerusalem by the Jordan valley, but as the temperature was rising and the road was hot and dusty He moved up into the hills of Judea, travelling leisurely, and, as He went, teaching tentatively by the wayside and in the villages, much on the same lines as John. His air of quiet authority combined with His simple and unambiguous presentation of the new way of life caused considerable interest and surprise, and attracted many who were ready for something better than the existing conditions. These were baptised, not by Himself—for He did not regard the rite as necessary, all that was essential being the changed heart—but by His companions: they were accustomed to John's methods, and the people themselves favoured a public ceremony since it reinforced their purpose. In the meantime, therefore, He permitted them to perform it.

John had also moved from the burning river region across to the uplands of northern Judea beside some copious springs and deep pools. There was an element of pathos now in his preaching, as the special task he had been sent to discharge might be regarded as finished, but he continued his mission and was still exercising a powerful influence. Some of his disciples, loyal to his cause and jealous for his honour, travelled

swiftly to the spot where Jesus was reported to be, and returned, in complaining mood, to John.

"Rabbi," they said, "the man who came to you on the other side of the Jordan and of whom you spoke so highly is over yonder teaching and baptising. It is not right."

"It is right," replied John. "It is the will of God. You know that I have never claimed to be the messiah. All that I have ever said is that I have been sent in advance to announce His coming and prepare the way for Him. He has come: He must increase and I must decrease."

No trace of annoyance, no touch of envy, no expression of regret.

"But He is drawing crowds," they said discontentedly. "Every one is going to Him."

"Such is my joy," was the emphatic reply of the great-souled prophet. "And it is complete."

Jesus did not long disturb the work of His forerunner: He moved over the rolling hills towards Jerusalem. He regarded the city now not through the ingenuous eyes of a boy, but against the background of His knowledge of its past history and the present conditions. It was no longer the glorious centre of religion undefiled. Side by side with the Temple rose magnificent pagan structures: the religious leaders were divided and mutually antagonistic: the hatred of the citizens for foreigners had become so intensified that to touch anything belonging to them was to be made unclean, and articles contaminated by their contact were destroyed: on the other hand, the aliens scorned the Jews and ridiculed their practice of circumcision, their Sabbath-keeping, and their abstinence from pork. All the explosive elements of social and political unrest were boiling beneath the surface of

ordinary life. The city presented a tremendous spiritual problem, but Jesus possessed now what He had never had on His previous visits, the consciousness of a Divine mission backed by the authority and power of the Unseen, and He was not dismayed.

Skirting the walls He went on over the Mount of Olives to Bethany to the quiet home where He was always a welcome guest. None of the inmates, and Mary least of all, was surprised to be told by John the Galilean and the others what had happened in the north.

Feeling the unreality and futility of the proceedings He took part in the passover festival. With His companions He walked through the Temple, noting with a stern eye the shameless mercenary traffic in the outer court. But the time to put an end to that was not yet. He began to speak to little knots of hearers in the corners of the courts and to heal cases of illness which appealed to His compassion. It was His medical powers which brought Him into notice. His cures were characterised by features different from those of the ordinary physicians. They were instant in their operation. He seemed to possess some virtue by which He was able to conquer both physical disorders and mental maladies. And, unlike other practitioners, He worked quietly and unobtrusively and sought to curb the excitement caused by His feats. Galileans who knew Him, proud of the sensation He was creating, were not slow to intimate that He was one of themselves and came from Nazareth. Ere long crowds gathered as soon as they knew He was speaking. The dignity of His presence, the simplicity and directness of His diction, the authority and finality which characterised His statements, impressed them with a sense of something novel and strange.

"Listen," He said, "the rule of the Law and the prophets was in force until John came: now it is the Kingdom of God that is being preached. The light of God has always been shining in the world to all with eyes to see it and yet men have preferred the darkness. Why? Because their actions are evil and they are afraid of the light because it will expose them. Those whose lives are clean and honest do not fear the light for they have nothing to hide. God loves all men and women and would have them renounce evil and follow what is good: so much so that He has sent His Son into the world not to condemn evil-doers but to save them. Whoever will believe in the Son and accept His teaching will naturally be believing in God and accepting Him and they will enter into His Kingdom of light, both in this life and in the hereafter. But all who hear the Son and do not believe what He says will remain in the dark and never enjoy the light any more than it is possible for a blind man to enjoy the sunlight. They have condemned themselves to the sphere of darkness by their refusal to believe. Such is the law of the Spirit."

Many exclamations broke from the throng.

"This is clear teaching and very different from the puzzling doctrines of the rabbis."

"It touches our heart and life."

"This is the prophet indeed."

These remarks were heard by the priests hovering on the outskirts. They were unimpressed and contemptuous.

"It is child's talk," they said to one another. "He can do no harm."

He was discussed in the markets and bazaars and drew a number of men always eager to join any new movement that was the latest fashion. Jesus was not

deceived: His spiritual vision penetrated deeper than they knew: He saw that their enthusiasm was superficial, their motives petty, and He remained cautious and reserved. To be adopted thus early by such a crowd, to trust Himself to their support, would only mean disaster.

There were others; men drooping in the suffocating atmosphere of Judaism; longing not so much for a messiah as for an escape from the intolerable weight of arid formalism which burdened them, and these welcomed the refreshing purity and simplicity of His teaching, sought Him out, talked with Him, and discussed His aims. Even members of the ecclesiastical governing class were attracted to Him, country villager though they knew Him to be, for not a few were earnest men of high principle.

One of these, Nicodemus, a wealthy pharisee, a prominent member of the Sanhedrin, who was naturally courageous but hampered by his intellectual and social upbringing, was curious to interview Jesus and find out exactly what His object was. As he could not very well go to Him openly he arranged through an intermediary to visit Him in private at Bethany, and one night walked out over the moonlit road of Olivet and was received in the upper room built, tower-like, at the corner of the roof. John the Galilean was present, ready as usual to take notes of the Teacher's words by the dim light of an oil lamp.

After a grave salutation they seated themselves on the couches. Nicodemus was embarrassed and found difficulty in beginning. In the brief silence they heard the night wind from the wide spaces of the east come sighing round the house.

"Rabbi," he said at last, using the Jewish title of honour, "we know you come from God to teach us,

for no one can do what you are doing unless God is with him."

It was an ingenious form of approach, but the affected humility, the subtle flattery, were lost on Jesus. He waited. Nicodemus went on in sudden eagerness.

"What kind of Kingdom is this of which you speak?"

Jesus smiled. The common phrase, the "Kingdom of God," which He was using, meant to the Jews the material sovereignty and rule of God on the earth. He had been giving it a new ethical and spiritual content; and it had puzzled many.

"The Kingdom of God?" He rejoined. "No one can enter it unless he is born again—born from above."

Nicodemus stared; he was a literalist; accustomed to interpretation on the basis of the exact meaning of words and phrases, he could not grasp the meaning of Jesus. As if reflecting he murmured:

"Born again? How can a man be re-born?"

"I speak of spiritual things," Jesus replied. "The Kingdom of God is different from the kingdom of the Jews; you enter your kingdom by material means, by outward methods; your whole outlook has to be changed. You have, so to speak, to be re-created, born of the Spirit, baptised with spiritual water, ere you can enter God's spiritual Kingdom. Surely that is clear. What is born of the material is still material, is it not? But what is born of the Spirit is spirit."

Nicodemus, himself encased in the material, gazed uncertainly at the young man; he could not grip the significance of the thought: it eluded him. Jesus saw his perplexity.

"You are wondering what I mean?" He held up His hand. "Listen to the wind. It blows whither it will and you hear the sound of it but you cannot tell

whence it comes or where it goes. So is it with the work of the Spirit."

Nicodemus was still puzzled. "I do not understand," he confessed.

"You! So learned a master in Israel! If you do not understand such a simple truth how are you going to understand when we proceed to speak of higher things?"

Patiently, clearly, lovingly, He went on to explain to this religious leader and authority, who represented the formal spirit of the age, the elementary principles of the spiritual life. Ere He finished Nicodemus seemed to see the whole system of Law and practice which he regarded as sacred and immutable come tumbling down in ruins; all tradition and ritual were swept clean away, but God had become real and near and life appeared re-born in a new and simpler guise, freer, more joyous.

When he rose to go he felt strangely stirred but also a little dazed and even dazzled as if by an exceedingly bright light. As he walked home the spell was still upon him. But beyond the crown of Olivet he came within sight of the city gleaming in the white moonlight like an immense fortress; high walls and towers, the Temple dome, shining lights and faint murmurs of evening life; and contact with the familiar and conventional cooled his heated mind and brought him back to the normal.

"An idealist!" he exclaimed, "a dreamer of impossible dreams!"

The wind wailing like a spirit in the mysterious spaces of the night moved through the olive trees and died, sighing, away. He drew his cloak more closely about him.

But somewhere in his consciousness lurked the haunt-

ing thought that the young man with the strange compelling eyes had spoken the truth.

A WOMAN HEARS THE TRUTH

To Jesus in Jerusalem appeared a number of stern-looking men who proved to be John's disciples; they brought the disquieting intelligence that the prophet had been arrested by Herod Antipas and imprisoned. It was a miserable story.

John's movements and his increasing popularity had been reported to Herod, who, wishing to know the meaning of it, had him summoned to his presence. John obeyed and stood before the monarch, grave and fearless, and told him the purport of his message to the people.

"Some sort of a religious revival," thought Herod; "there is nothing seditious in it."

Then John, turning the conversation into a personal channel, referred to Herod's union with Herodias and rebuked him for committing an act opposed to Jewish law and the principles of morality and public decency and obnoxious to the people he governed. Herod was more amused than annoyed; he rather admired the honest robust character of the young prophet and was conscious enough that he was right. In the end he dismissed him with a caution to avoid revolutionary propaganda and be more circumspect in his language regarding the royal house. Later he entertained Herodias with an account of the interview. To his surprise she was furious, shook with passion, and denounced the insolent puritan preacher with a venom which it amazed him to see even in her.

"He must die," she said.

Herod protested against so extreme a step.

"He is regarded as a holy man by the population and if I arrested him on so personal a ground it would provoke a disturbance, and I cannot risk that—yet."

But her deadly hate would brook no delay: she subjected Herod to a persistent importunity which irritated and wearied him. He would have held out but a mysterious hint that the powerful pharisaic party was turning against John and would not be displeased to see him out of the way suggested that he might appear to fall in with her desire. Accusing John of fomenting a nationalist movement inimical to the Roman power he had him seized and imprisoned. Apparently he had no intention of doing more.

Jesus was grieved at this news and asked where John had been confined.

"In the castle at Tiberias. But certain of us are allowed to see him. Herod has had long talks with him. He has naught against him, and we hope he will by and by be released."

Jesus bade them carry back a message of sympathy and affection and gave instructions that those who had access to him should do everything for his comfort.

He had to reconsider His own position. In the arrest of John He detected the hidden hand of the pharisees; and if their machinations had succeeded in his case they would be sure to proceed against Himself since He was beginning to create as much stir and attracting even more enquirers and followers. Friendly warnings also reached Him to the same effect; and as His plan was not to challenge the authorities but to carry on a quiet campaign of education He decided to return to Galilee.

With John and other Galileans who had waited on with Him He left at dawn and took the road through

the terraced uplands with their far views of faint blue hills dominated by the white summit of Hermon and entered Samaria, the strip of country which the Jerusalem Jews regarded as a foreign land, so strong was their hatred of their renegade co-religionists—who reciprocated the feeling and deliberately annoyed all travellers passing from Judea to Galilee or Galilee to Judea. The road wound through woods and glades and glens musical with running water, and across fields of grain, with here and there a village half-concealed by masses of foliage. Then over pasture grounds alive with stock to Jacob's well dug in ancient days by one of the pioneer settlers of the race at the foot of the twin hills Ebal and Gerizim, and now a favourite and much-frequented camping ground. The water it collected was soft and cool and was preferred to that of the springs which issued from the limestone strata of the hills.

It was shortly before noon: the air was quivering in the heat, and the little company, dusty and tired and suffering from thirst and hunger, sat down at the side of the well to rest for a little. Before them rose the isolated heights, Mount Ebal on the right, Mount Gerizim, of lesser height, on the left with the Samaritan Temple on its crest shining in the sunlight; in the gulf between the two ran the highway into Shechem out of sight over the rising ground; close under Ebal the village of Sychar nestled in a grove of trees, and in front of it was the gleaming dome of Jacob's tomb. The land about them was divided into fields by lines of stones or boulders, and the whole expanse was white with the ripening barley. Butterflies flitted among the wild blossoms and through the slumbrous air came the flute-like calls of hidden birds.

The men began to talk among themselves. One Galilean from the hill-country remarked on the early date at which harvest arrived in Judea.

"It will be four months yet in Galilee ere our harvest begins," he remarked.

Jesus listened silently for a time and then said:

"Go now and procure food. I will remain here and wait for you."

As they walked in single file along the narrow paths between the fields and disappeared towards Shechem Jesus noticed the figure of a woman moving down from Sychar, a water jar poised slant-wise on her head and a cord in her hand. It was a time when all toilers were resting, but she was probably coming for a fresh supply for the field hands who had gone into the village for the midday meal.

She approached without hesitation until, perceiving that the solitary figure was a stranger and a Jew, she stopped, but only for a moment: His bearing seemed distinguished and His expression inoffensive. She proceeded boldly to fill her jar.

"Give me a drink."

The kind voice, so soft and musical, unlike that of her menfolk, startled her: she turned and looked at Him in surprise.

"How is it that you, a Jew, ask drink of me who am a Samaritan? You know," she added in a tone of reproof, "that the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans."

"Ah," replied Jesus, "if you knew what God has done and who is asking you for a drink you would have asked of me instead, and I would have given you living water."

Living water? Did He mean spring water?

"Sir, where would you get living water? If you mean this water, the well is deep and you have nothing to draw it up with."

Then with a touch of pride she added, "Our father Jacob dug this well for us: are you greater than he?"

She saw Him smile in a way that seemed to her strangely beautiful.

"They who drink this water will thirst again, but they who drink the water I can give will never thirst again. The water I give will become a fountain of eternal life—life now and life always."

Her mind was quick: it leapt to the material suggestion the words conveyed.

"Sir," she cried, "give me this water so that I will never thirst again nor need to come all this way to draw water!"

The age-long cry of the human heart! He looked at her with mingled compassion and kindness.

"Go," He said gently, "and call your husband and come again."

She started, shrank back, and laughed foolishly.

"Sir . . . I have no husband."

"True," the calm voice replied, "for you have had five, and the man you have now espoused is not your husband."

Speechless she gazed at Him. Who was this who knew her stormy, sinful past?

"I see," she stammered at last, "that you are a prophet."

The word sent her thoughts in a new direction; it recalled religious differences and village controversies, and with apparent inconsequence she said:

"Our fathers worshipped, and we worship, on Mount Gerizim here, whereas you Jews say the proper place is at Jerusalem. Which is right?"

"Woman, believe me you do not know what you are worshipping. The time is coming—has come—when God, our Father, will be worshipped neither on this mountain nor at Jerusalem. God is Spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. That is the only worship He desires."

The words were like music: they brought to her a new thought of that faith in the All-Highest which years of licence and rough living had blotted from her mind.

"We women do not know about these things," she said humbly. "But when the messiah comes he will make everything clear."

So, even in this degraded woman in a Samaritan village He found the hope of a coming Saviour.

"I, who am talking to you, am He," He said quietly.

Wonder, awe, even terror, sprang into her eyes, but there was no time for more. His companions had returned and were regarding the two with unconcealed surprise. Jesus talking openly and frankly with a strange woman and she a Samaritan! But they were silent: they were beginning to realise that He cared nothing for man-made restrictions and conventions: that He placed Himself above them.

The woman had been so engrossed that she did not notice their approach, and now, embarrassed by their presence, she hurriedly lifted her jar of water and was making off when she remembered the request of Jesus and His need. Instantly she set down the jar at His feet, and, turning, hastened across the fields. The people sitting at their doors in the shade saw her come flying up the street and heard her crying excitedly:

"Come and see a man who told me all I have ever done! He says He is the messiah!"

They flocked round her and heard her story and be-

came as interested as herself and within a few minutes they were streaming out of the village towards the well.

Meanwhile the companions of Jesus produced the food they had purchased and noticing His weariness pressed Him to partake.

"Teacher, eat," they urged.

He took what was offered but said, "I have food of which you know nothing."

They looked at each other. Had the woman brought Him food? He was conscious of the unspoken question.

"My food is to do the will of Him who sent me and to finish His work of saving the world. Look!" He pointed to the villagers, who, clothed in white, were converging upon them by various paths. "Did I not hear you say that it was yet four months in Galilee until the harvest? But the fields here are already white and ripe for harvesting!"

They caught the allusion and waited expectantly as the crowd came up and eagerly but respectfully approached them. No more attentive and earnest audience had Jesus yet had as He spoke to them of the need for changed conditions of life and the way to rest and peace. So impressed were they that they induced Him to stay in their village for two days. The story of the woman was repeated and John heard it and took a note of it as a singular instance of His breadth of view and unconventionality of practice. Ere He left most of the people had become His converts. As they said to the woman, "We do not believe because of what you said, but on account of what we have seen and heard ourselves. We know now that He is the saviour of the world."

In order to avoid Shechem, and the neighbouring

pagan town of Samaria, with its palaces and temples and hippodrome, Jesus continued straight on to the north. Where the roads forked He dismissed the Lake men to their homes and with those of the hills He went up to Nazareth. A report of His doings at Jerusalem had preceded Him, and though the people welcomed Him they seemed uncertain how to take Him: they contented themselves with watching and waiting. If they expected some striking demonstration of His powers they were disappointed for He spoke quietly, as opportunity offered, about the better way of life. They were not impressed and He knew the cause. "A prophet," He said, "has no honour in his own country." He went over the hill to Cana.

One afternoon He was told that a Government official from Capernaum had called to see Him. He found him to be one of a type not uncommon even in the dissolute circle of the Court, for men in the most unlikely places were feeling after higher principles of life. He had heard of Jesus and also of the cures He had effected at Jerusalem. "If I but saw Him perform one of His wonders," he had said, "I would believe in Him." Unexpectedly the occasion had come. His son had succumbed to malarial fever and was seriously ill, and now he had come in person to beg Jesus to proceed to the Lake and heal him.

But Jesus had a lesson to impart.

"Except," He said pointedly, "you see signs and wonders you will not believe."

"Sir," replied the officer urgently, "he is at the point of death; his life is burning itself out. Come down, I beseech you, ere he die."

Jesus saw that curiosity had been engulfed by anxiety and was touched by his distress. He said gently:

"Return then to your home: your son lives."

So great was the man's faith that he remained the night at Cana having talk with Jesus and set out next morning. On the way he met a couple of his servants hurrying to Cana.

"It is well with the lad," they assured him. "The crisis is past and he is recovering."

He received the news with so little feeling that they showed surprise.

"I know," he told them. "What time did the fever leave him?"

"Yesterday at seven o'clock."

He nodded. "That was when Jesus cured him."

To the family he related the story of his interview with Jesus and they saw that he was a changed man; so changed for the better and so happy that it was not long before his wife and the whole household followed his example and became loyal believers and strong supporters of Jesus.

"KILL HIM!"

It was May. The fields of ripe grain had been cut and garnered and the people were leaving for the Feast of Pentecost at Jerusalem, one of the three great festivals which every man who was able was supposed to attend: it marked the conclusion of the harvest and the spirit associated with it was one of thanksgiving and rejoicing. Of all the feasts it was the most largely attended by Jews from other parts of the world, for the season was the best for travelling. Jesus realised the opportunity it would give Him of reaching the more broad-minded and enlightened types of the race who if influenced might carry His teaching abroad. Accordingly with several chosen adherents, among whom

was John, He made a rapid journey to Judea. During the week He went among the pilgrims, coming into personal touch with them, teaching them in quiet little groups and dropping into their minds seed-thoughts that were to bear results in far-distant lands.

On the Sabbath He walked observantly about the streets and popular resorts, and visited the Bath of Bethesda, in the north-east quarter, which was much frequented by the sick and diseased on account of the medicinal qualities of the water. Descending the flight of broad steps into the arched porches which surrounded the bathing pools He found the place crowded with patients waiting for the bubbling up of the water. The fact that the spring was an intermittent one—not an unusual phenomenon in Palestine—had given rise in the minds of the ignorant and superstitious to the notion that a spirit or angel had charge of the arrangement and regulated the flow. When the water became "troubled" there was an exciting scramble, every one fighting to be the first to plunge into it and secure the benefit of what was believed to be its supernatural virtue.

It was a pitiful gathering of human wreckage. Many of the illnesses were obviously the effect of folly and passion: their victims had a coarse and dissipated appearance; they were only eager to be cured in order to indulge again in sin. As Jesus passed they whined and begged and because He gave them only a look of pity cursed and swore.

Lying helpless on a thin mattress of goatskin was an elderly man sunk in apathetic resignation and misery. He was unattended, his friends having carried him there—as it was lawful to do on the Sabbath—and left him to his own devices, having neither time nor inclination to remain with him.

Jesus looked down upon him with compassionate eyes.

"How long have you been like this?" He enquired.

The dull eyes gazed up at the stranger.

"For thirty-eight years off and on."

"Do you want to be made well?"

"Sir," he replied hopelessly, "when the bath fills up I have no one to carry me quickly down. Who cares for a wretch like me?"

"I do. Rise," was the thrilling command, "take up your bed and walk!"

The man's gaunt face lit up with a kind of astonished hope: involuntarily he flung up his hands, and, feeling power pulsating within them, he essayed to rise, then leapt to his feet and walked up and down in a frenzy of delight. He was healed. Turning to pour out his thanks to the stranger, he found that He had disappeared in the crowd. So momentary had been the incident that it had passed unnoticed and all were amazed to see the well-known twisted figure moving about vigorous and alert.

"Who cured you? How did it happen?" came from all sides.

"I know not: He who did it is gone: a physician indeed!"

He rolled up his mat and, although aware of the strict law against carrying bundles on the Sabbath, he shouldered it and ascended to the street where he ran up against a number of Temple officials. They ordered him peremptorily to halt.

"What is this? Do you not know it is the Sabbath?"

"I am doing what I was told. The man who healed me said 'Take up your bed and walk.' "

"Who healed you?"

"I know not. He vanished even before I could thank Him."

"At the bath?"

"Yes."

They conferred together, then addressed the man.

"If you see Him again come and report to us. Leave your mat; you must not trangress the Law."

He obeyed and proceeded to the Temple to give thanks to God for his recovery; and there, suddenly, he was conscious that the stranger was gazing upon him once more. Before those wonderful eyes which seemed to be examining his very soul his own fell; the words of gratitude died away on his lips; he stood in mute and abject humility.

"You are healed now," he heard the kind voice say. "Take care that you do not sin again for if you do a worse fate awaits you."

"Who is that?" he asked a bystander as Jesus moved off.

"Jesus of Galilee, the new prophet."

Should he go and tell the officials? Would it get Jesus into trouble? He was proud of being cured by so distinguished a personage and inclined to be contemptuous of the ordinary rabbis who talked much but were unable to perform such deeds. Yes, he would report the name of the healer.

He went to the Temple.

"I have discovered who cured me," he said to the officials.

"Well, tell us."

"It was Jesus the prophet from Galilee."

"As we thought," they replied coldly and dismissed him.

From that moment Jesus began to experience their

resentment. The Sabbath was one of the glories of their religion and here was this untrained teacher trampling it underfoot! They shadowed Him, ostentatiously took notes of His words, and hindered His movements in every way.

"Why do you persecute me?" He said, on one occasion when they came in a body to listen to Him. "Why are you angry because I healed a life? Your Sabbath rule gives way sometimes in cases of need. You should not judge these things by artificial regulations but by the law of love and service. Do you not know that from the beginning my Father has been working to make the world beautiful and men and women wise and good and that I have been sent to help in His work? It is your happiness we seek."

"Who is your father?" they retorted.

"My Father is God."

"What! you, a man, a Galilean, make yourself equal with God? You are guilty of blasphemy and ought to be slain."

"Kill him!" bellowed a voice.

A number, thus incited, advanced threateningly, but He faced them with so calm and fearless an air that they paused and the tumult died down as quickly as it had risen.

He raised His hand:

"I, who am the Son of God, am doing nothing of myself; I can only carry out my Father's wishes and act in line with His will. He loves me and He inspires me how to do His work. He has endowed me with His power so that I can heal and forgive and save. Those, therefore, that do not honour me do not honour God. Those who hear me and believe on me and obey my teaching, which tells of the law of God, gain something of that supreme quality which means eternal

life here and now and also hereafter. Ah! as the world is now it is a spiritual graveyard, full of living men and women who are dead, but the time has come when even the dead may hear the voice of God and believe and live."

The intense earnestness, the simplicity of the words freighted with so extraordinary a meaning, the accent of authority, moved His hearers against their will, but shaking off the impression they cried:

"We have only your statement for that."

"Granted that these words of mine do not count for much, have you not the witness of John, that burning and shining light? My Father also has borne witness of me though you are unaware of that. And you have the evidence of the things I do and the character of my teaching—do these not prove that the Father has sent me? If you knew God and loved Him you would know Him as He really is but you have a false idea of Him. Is it not strange that although I come in His name you will not accept me and yet you will receive and honour any false or evil-minded teacher who appeals to your worldly ambition?"

"You accuse us unjustly."

"I do not accuse you," and His voice was now cutting in its incisiveness, "the great leader and lawgiver of your nation whom you revere and obey—he accuses you. Did he not point to such as I? If you believe in him you would believe in me. Clearly you do not believe in him! You search the scriptures indeed; you study and follow them minutely in order to gain eternal life, but you miss their meaning for they show the gradual revealing of God leading up to this revelation of Himself in me. If you came to me you would gain life and happiness—but you will not."

The quiet scorn of the remarks enraged His hearers;

they turned to the people who had been rapidly gathering.

"He tells *us* to read! How can this fellow himself read? He is a peasant and has never been through our colleges. Where has He got His knowledge of the Law and the training to speak in this way?"

Jesus, hearing them, said:

"I have told you that my teaching is not my own. If I had gone to your colleges I should but echo your learning. My teaching is His who sent me. It is not necessary to have a college education to know the truth. Any one who loves God and knows His will can tell whether my teaching is true or not. A self-interested man seeks his own glory; but one who comes without thought of self in the service of God is likely to speak the truth and should be believed. Why, therefore," He added pointedly, addressing His opponents, "do you seek to kill me?"

At the direct thrust the leaders remained silent, but the people in general who knew nothing of their designs warmly repudiated the charge.

"Who seeks to kill you! You are mad!"

Such encounters brought home to Jesus the incredible stupidity of men: not even the gracious power of the Divine love and wisdom could soften hearts petrified by custom and self-righteousness and selfishness. His thoughts turned again to the quiet beauty of the district around the Lake of Galilee where the people were simple in character, more receptive in mind, and engaged in natural and wholesome toil, and He resolved to return and make His headquarters there while teaching and training a body of disciples who would in their own day and way carry on His work.

A swift journey brought Him through Samaria to the cross-roads where He parted from John, sending

him back to his home with instructions to inform the friends there that He would follow, while He Himself went on to Nazareth, arranged for the transference of His mother to Capernaum, and then at leisure proceeded by Cana to the Lake.

WHEN THE SUN SET

He entered Capernaum when the people were turning with morning energy to the work of the day. The news that the Teacher, who was said to possess more than human powers, had arrived spread rapidly, and as He swung along the streets He was the object of general curiosity. Men and women rushed to their doors to see Him; the children, excited by the behaviour of their elders, ran at His heels. With swift light steps He made His way to the Lake and walked along its margin until He came to a shallow bay which cut, curving, into the shore. In the offing several fishing boats rode at anchor, and inshore, in a tranquil reach, two men clad in loin-cloth, were standing some distance apart patiently throwing their hand-nets in the hope of a catch. They were too engrossed to notice the little crowd which rounded the hillock.

Jesus knew them. "Simon!" He called, "Andrew!"

They turned eagerly and seeing Jesus waded ashore. He asked them why they were using the hand-net.

"We have been out all night in the boat but it was rough and we caught nothing."

"Follow me now and I will teach you to fish for men."

The call at last! They threw down their nets and stood erect in the full vigour of their young manhood, the glow of surrender on their faces. Jesus looked at them with pride.

"John: he has come?"

"He is here: he has been telling us of all the things at Jerusalem."

They walked on, the people after them, and came to a vessel drawn up close to the beach in which a number of men were mending the nets torn during the night.

"John! James!"

"It is He: it is Jesus!" cried John, starting up. He leapt out of the boat, followed by James, and came to Him. They, too, heard with delight that He wished them to become His personal disciples. Returning to the boat they told their father Zebedee who cheerfully agreed.

"I and my hired men will easily carry on in your absence," he said.

The crowd began to press upon Jesus, curious to hear what was going on.

"Simon," He said, "which is your boat?"

"That one, out there."

"Bring her to land."

Simon plunged into the water, swam out with long easy strokes, brought in the boat, and, assisted by Andrew, drew it up to where Jesus was standing. He entered.

"Now push out a little."

They did so, and Jesus, sitting in the bows, signed to the people, and they gathered close to the edge of the water and He spoke to them. The scene contrasted strangely with those at Jerusalem. After the storm the water had fallen to a dead calm and was shining like burnished silver; the air was still and brilliantly clear; the audience stood against a background of green verdure and quiet hills. His voice, soft and penetrating, carried like music. It was the same message He had for all, the exceeding love of God for human-

ity, His desire for their happiness, and the way by which they could secure it.

As He spoke He watched their faces and noticed how when at rest many took on the care-worn, anxious expression common to toilers whose work is hard and whose income and outlook are insecure. With an understanding pity He sought to lift them into a higher region of thought.

"There are those amongst you who are feeling the burden of life heavy, who are afraid of falling into want, who dread the uncertainties of the morrow. But I say to you, be not anxious about what you will eat, or drink, or wear. Look . . ." and He pointed to the birds winging their way through the golden atmosphere—"the birds do not sow, or reap, or gather food into barns. Your Father in heaven feeds them. Are you not of much more value than they? Can you by being anxious add to your height? Why then be anxious about things over which you have really no control? Learn a lesson from these flowers on the hillside. Watch how they grow, they do not toil, neither do they spin, yet even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If God clothes the grass of the field which grows to-day and to-morrow is thrust into your ovens will He not much more clothe you? Oh, men and women of little faith! Do not therefore be over-anxious about the morrow; do not worry as to what you will eat, or drink, or wear. These are the things which the pagans think of and seek after. Your Father in heaven knows that you need them. Have faith in Him. First seek His kingdom, do His will, and all other things will be yours, naturally, as the result of quiet and confident work.

"There are also some amongst you who are straining to save money, devoting your whole heart and

mind to lay up treasure for yourselves. What is the use of doing that on earth where moths and rust consume and where thieves steal? Rather lay up treasure for yourselves in heaven where there are neither moths nor rust to consume, nor thieves to steal. Love, obedience, kindness, these and such as these, are the treasures of heaven. Earthly wealth lures you from the Kingdom, for where your treasure is there will your heart be also. It is not easy for a man to serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other or else he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot be both worldly and spiritual; you cannot serve God and mammon."

Sweeter than the music of His voice was the beauty of the thoughts which His words stirred in their minds long atrophied by unintelligent repetition of formal phrases. They were both attracted and startled, for never before had they heard such teaching. They were busy with the wonder of it when He rose and looked out over the wide sheet of water. Suddenly He turned and said:

"Pull out further, Simon, and lower your drag-net for a take."

Simon looked his surprise.

"But, Teacher," he remonstrated, "we have been out all night and have taken nothing."

Receiving no answer he glanced at Jesus and met His eye. It was enough. Hastily he and Andrew seized the oars and rowed out into deep water.

"Now, Simon."

They let down the net from the stern and then drew it in; it was heavy with fish; they were in the midst of a shoal feeding after the storm.

"We must have help," exclaimed Simon, and, rising, he halloed over the water to James and John and sig-

nalled to them; they came rapidly out and all were busy for a time hauling in the fish. Both vessels were heavily laden and had to be carefully handled. The moment they reached the shore Simon impulsively fell on his knees before Jesus.

"Lord," he cried, "I am not worthy to be your disciple. I am a sinful man."

Jesus smiled kindly. "Have no fear, Simon, you will yet be as good a fisher of men as you are a skilful catcher of fish."

They handed over their cargoes and vessels to their partners and friends, relinquished their ordered lives and settled interests and ways, and set forth with Jesus on what seemed a mad but glorious adventure.

They proceeded to Capernaum, and at Simon's earnest solicitation Jesus agreed to stay with them. Simon was married and his mother-in-law also lived in the house. At the moment she was down with malarial fever in her own quarters but of this Simon did not inform Jesus.

In the cool shade of the inner court day by day Jesus began His training of the four raw fishermen, instructing them in the profound simplicities of God's way of life, without haste, quietly, patiently, with intervals when they took walks over the hills and went sailing on the Lake.

When the threefold trumpet blast announced the advent of the Sabbath they made their way to the synagogue, the massive white stone structure facing the Lake and Jerusalem, with its richly carved front and the symbolic pot of manna above the doorway. They ascended the broad steps, passed through the portico, and entered the building, the congregation making room for them and regarding them with lively interest —Jesus with His indefinable air of distinction and calm

authority, and the four men awkwardly conscious of their new *rôle* yet grave and thoughtful.

The service went on and by and by the president of the congregation, following the custom when any distinguished stranger was present, approached Jesus and asked Him to address the worshippers. There was a stir of interest and then a sudden hush.

Jesus ascended the platform and stood at the lectern. The attendant drew aside the veil on the wall behind and taking from a receptacle, below the ever-burning lamp, the roll of scriptures, placed it before Him. Jesus read a portion and then, sitting down, facing the audience, began to speak to them. They listened as if fascinated. His voice, low and clear and perfectly modulated, possessed a quality which moved and thrilled them. The words He used were the ordinary ones of common life, but the thoughts behind were life-shaking in their implications. This was not what they had been accustomed to Sabbath by Sabbath: there was no professional patter here: no pedantic exposition of the letter of the Law, no bloodless argument regarding the tenets of the schools. This was a new note in religious teaching with nothing of the uncertain tones of the rabbis in it: this Man spoke with the conviction of one who knew the truth, and whose business it was to present it to them in all its beauty and power.

They whispered amongst themselves, "He is a wonder." "Is it not Jesus of Nazareth?" "Can He be a messenger from the all-Highest after all?" "What does it mean?" "He claims to be the holy Son of God."

The tense atmosphere was torn by a wild shriek. One of the insane characters of the town, unbalanced by excess, had crept into the synagogue and heard the

comments of those on the outskirts of the throng: these had pierced his disordered brain, touched some slumbering consciousness, and awakened remorse and fear.

"Let us alone," he shouted. "What have we to do with you, Jesus of Nazareth? Do you want to destroy us?"

Jesus looked towards the man, but ere He could speak, an expression of cunning came into the crazy creature's face.

"Ay, I know who you are," he cried. "You are the holy one of God!"

Those nearest him stepped aside and he stood exposed, filthy in his rags, filthy in his mind, shrinking yet defiant, leering and impotent, wholly possessed by the unclean forces of animalism.

Such cases were not uncommon, but the medical science of the age was unable to diagnose their nature: the popular mind attributed them to devil-possession. As they were regarded as beyond cure the congregation waited breathlessly to see how Jesus would deal with this man: it was surely not in His power to heal *him*.

But Jesus knew the possibilities of re-creating human nature and, very quietly, He rebuked the man, who cowered and trembled, and then He uttered a few compassionate words. The onlookers saw the lunatic stand upright, saw his face smooth out, saw a look of intelligence come into the eyes. Sweetness and peace after black and whirling storm. Cries of wonderment and awe, not unmixed with fear, rose on every side. No magical incantations, no rite of exorcism, only a simple command! Something new indeed! They streamed out to spread the story as far as it could be told within the limits of a Sabbath day's journey.

Escaping from the excited and admiring throng, Jesus returned with His disciples to Simon's house. Simon's wife had already heard what had occurred, and when her husband appeared she said to him:

"If Jesus can heal so easily ask Him to cure my mother."

He was reluctant to solicit the help of Jesus for a domestic and personal purpose, but the patient becoming rapidly worse he ventured to mention the matter. Jesus rose instantly and accompanied him to the sick room. The woman was lying on a low pallet, her eyes glittering, her face flushed. He stooped down, took her burning hand in His, and drew her gently up. It seemed to those who stood by that He "rebuked" the fever as He had done the abnormal condition of the lunatic: the hot face became cool, the skin grew moist, the languor vanished, and she stood up with the energy of health and expressed her gratitude. In a few moments she was bustling about assisting her daughter to minister to the company.

This additional proof of the compassion and power of Jesus was soon known to the Sabbath groups in the streets and served to increase the general animation. On the following day, which was still the Sabbath, little of the usual listless sober demeanour was shown: the people went from house to house with talk about Jesus or discussed Him at street corners; and there was a suppressed excitement, an air of impatience, which only dread of the rigorous penalties imposed for violating the Sabbath laws prevented from issuing in action.

But as the sun set in a blaze of lingering colour over the high hill-ridges, and the shadows about the Lake deepened from lilac to purple, and the Sabbath ended, the decorous restraint of the people gave way, and a scene ensued such as had never yet been witnessed in

the world. Cities in endless numbers had been besieged and attacked and the inhabitants put to the sword; streets had run red with blood; the passions of men had glutted themselves with every form of cruelty and torture; but here in this Galilean town, in the soft twilight of a summer night, through the darkening thoroughfares, came a community to be healed and comforted; strange sad processions, the sick carried on their pallets, the blind led by patient hands, cripples supported on strong shoulders, maniacs chained and dragged by force, white-bearded figures decrepit and tottering, young children emaciated with disease, all making for Simon's house, along with throngs of spectators curious and expectant.

They filled the long and narrow street and every nook and corner where a foothold could be obtained. A strange quiet prevailed, unusual in an Eastern gathering; but there were faint whisperings and murmurings, and now and then a low moan of pain, or a stifled cry: it was as if all minds were on the strain waiting in suspense for some great thing to happen.

Suddenly a smothered exclamation and a deeper silence. Jesus had appeared. He stood robed in white, seen of all, and gazed over the shadowy outlines of the multitude. The semi-darkness, the oppressive atmosphere, the cool stars with their suggestion of eternal calm, the mute, expectant people with their sufferings and sorrows, and that mystic-like figure on which their hopes were centred—it was the world in miniature with its burden of sin and disease waiting wistfully in darkness and ignorance for light and healing and peace.

With the glow of Divine compassion in His eyes Jesus stepped down and went among the people, laying His cool hand upon the fevered brow, straightening the bent and twisted limb, restoring the lost reason,

speaking kind words to broken hearts, creating tides of new life, hope and joy where settled misery and despair had prevailed.

His disciples, as they followed in His steps and watched the transformation He wrought, could not but recall the words of the old prophet, which, as Galileans, they knew:

"The people who dwelt by the Lake in darkness have seen a great light, and to them who sat in the region and shadow of death light has sprung up."

FACING THE ENEMY

After such an outpouring of spiritual force Jesus felt the need for a renewal of strength and for communion with His Father, and as dawn broke amongst the high clouds and the air became murmurous with the twittering of sparrows, the call of fowls, and the cry of children, and all the sounds of awakening life, He emerged into the street. Early risers saw the tall figure moving swiftly up the side lanes into the fields and disappear among the green slopes.

Far up on the rough hillside He paused a moment, turning to regard the vision of morning beauty below—the dark gleaming water, the fleet of fishing vessels outspread on its surface, the fringe of smoky towns, all seen through a delicate filmy haze. Then into a secluded hollow where He was alone with God.

When the disciples came and heard that He had gone they went to look for Him. They were told that He had been seen making for the hillside and His route was pointed out: it was one of His favourite climbs. They proceeded in the same direction, being joined on the way by a number of others, thoughtful townspeople, desirous now to hear more of the spiritual mes-

sage which they had ignored in the interest of the healings. On the bare high lands it was not difficult to discover Him: they saw His white figure in the distance. When they drew near Simon said:

"Teacher, the people are after you already."

But Jesus had His own plan: His disciples must be taken out of their familiar surroundings and begin to feel the responsibility of their position. This was the best time of the year for a journey: it was summer, when the people throughout Galilee were at leisure and able in large numbers to attend meetings.

"I am going to other towns," He said, "and you are coming with me."

The townspeople were disappointed and appealed to Him to remain; they wanted, they said, to hear more of His ethical doctrine and the new Kingdom.

"But there are many other towns that need me and to them I must also go. Later I will return to Capernaum."

It was a prolonged tour occupying many months; they visited most of the Jewish towns and villages on the plains and uplands of Galilee, and in each the Capernaum scene was repeated, the sick and disabled, the epileptic and the insane, being brought to Him in increasing numbers. Continually He was in contact with disease, breathing the sultry atmosphere of sin, and for none had He such pity as the innocent sufferers, the little children and the women, the victims of ignorance and wrong-doing.

As He travelled His fame spread and drew within His influence people from an ever-widening region: they came from Jerusalem and all parts of Judea, from the Greek cities and the country districts in trans-Jordania, from upper Syria, foreigners as well as Jews, attracted by His extraordinary power which seemed

to overrule the laws of nature, or by the hope of being made well. He was as yet regarded less as a teacher than as a wonder-worker; as a physician of bodies rather than a saviour of souls. But with the healing they were given teaching such as they had never known. In the synagogues, in the streets and squares, and by the wayside or stream, He found His audiences, often only two or three, sometimes a score or a hundred and more; and in their hearts He planted the simple words of truth, and everywhere He left changed lives and a little knot of permanent believers.

On His way back to Capernaum He noticed at one point a number of people hastily scattering and heard the cry "Unclean, unclean!" A leper had been told that the miracle worker was coming his way and a wild hope had seized him. Blotched and disfigured, the caricature of a man, he advanced fearfully and yet pleadingly and threw himself on his knees. Jesus halted.

"Lord, cleanse me!"

The disciples circled them both with the liveliest interest; here was a new problem; the various types of disease classed as leprosy were held to involve moral and physical uncleanness: the victim was looked upon as practically dead; he was a corpse and any one touching him was ceremonially defiled. Jesus did not hesitate. To Him there was no difference between diseases; they were due to broken law, and the more loathsome a man appeared the greater call there was for pity and healing.

"Lord," again came the agonised cry. "I believe you can make me clean."

Here was absolute faith and Jesus recognised and rewarded it.

"I will," He said, bending down and laying His

fingertips on the foul skin. Instantly the man stood erect, whole and wholesome.

Something in the surprised and perplexed look of His disciples reminded Jesus of the Law according to which He was now Himself unclean for a short season and ought to avoid contact with the public. He turned to the man:

"Say nothing of this to any one. You are a Jew. Go and make the offerings prescribed by the Law and obtain the certificate which will restore you to your place in the community."

He went off and in order not to give offence Jesus withdrew with His disciples to the solitude of the hills, but by and by they were beset and surrounded by another contingent of people. On entering his village the cured leper had been angrily repulsed and compelled in self-defence to tell that he had been healed and by whom—and so this invasion of fresh country-folk whose burning curiosity out-weighed their fear of the Law. Until the excitement subsided Jesus remained secluded in the hills and then, moving south, entered Capernaum quietly at night.

Next day the news spread that He was back and there was a movement towards Simon's house. Among those who pressed into the court were one or two local pharisees accompanied by a number of grave, important-looking individuals, officials from Jerusalem, who had arrived with the object of estimating the character and work of the young Galilean prophet and examining His doctrine and methods. As privileged persons they claimed the seating accommodation and the common people stood. In a short time the yard was full.

Jesus appeared on the upper balcony. His eye swept over the assemblage and rested on the group of stran-

gers who were regarding Him critically. He sensed their hostile attitude and without preamble pointedly addressed them:

"Judge not that you be not judged, for with the judgment you judge you yourselves will be judged; what you deal out to others will be dealt out to you. Why do you note the splinter in the eye of your brother and do not regard the beam in your own? Why do you say to him 'let me take out the splinter in your eye,' and do not pull out the beam in your own? Hypocrites! first remove what is in your own eye and then you will see more clearly to take out the speck in your brother's. You are ready to condemn me. Condemn not and you will not be condemned. Do not be hard; forgive and you will be forgiven. Be generous in all your acts, it is more blessed to give than to receive; give love and kindness and happiness and you yourself will receive good measure, pressed down, and running over. For with the same measure that you mete out these things to others will it be measured to you.

"You think that I have come to destroy the Law and the teaching of the prophets? I have not come to destroy but to fulfil. I am here to carry out the real law of God and reveal it to men. Thus solemnly I say to you that till heaven and earth pass away one jot or one tittle of that law will in no wise pass until all be fulfilled in the life of humanity. Whoever breaks it, even in the least degree, and teaches men to do the same will rank least in the Kingdom of Heaven, but whoever obeys and teaches it will be accounted great in that Kingdom."

He paused and then addressed the people in general:

"I assure you that unless your goodness and charity

exceed the standard of the scribes and pharisees you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven."

They were appalled at His daring; spoken with quiet deliberation the words sounded like the sentence of a judge, and they glanced fearfully at the visitors, expecting an angry outburst, but although inwardly fuming these kept their impassive and slightly contemptuous expression. At that moment a commotion in the archway diverted attention.

Four men had advanced towards the court bearing a stretcher suspended from their shoulders by means of ropes; on it lay the twisted form of a man who had been seized with paralysis. Crying "Make way! make way!" like the camel and donkey-drivers in the bazaars, they attempted to push through into the court; but the people were so tightly wedged that a passage was difficult and their intrusion was resented and resisted and they came to a standstill. Determined not to be baulked they mounted the outside stair of the neighbouring house and walked over the flat roof and reached the point above the gallery where Jesus was speaking. Swiftly and easily they wrenched off the tiles and made an opening large enough to admit the man and his mat, and lowering him by the ropes they deposited him right at the feet of Jesus. It was but the work of a few moments. He had been watching the operation with a smile and He smiled again reassuringly as He looked up at the four dark faces peering down from the aperture. It was pleasant to witness such absolute faith.

He studied the man and read his history, that of one who had brought himself to nervous exhaustion and collapse by the violence of his life. The appeal in his eyes, dog-like in its dumb humility, was not so much for healing as for cleansing; here was a soul satiated with

indulgence, loathing its weakness and worthlessness, craving for reparation and strength to live aright. The response of Jesus was instant:

"My son, be of good cheer. Your sins are forgiven."

The pharisees and scribes sat up with a shock of surprise. This was worse than His insolence to them. No one but God could forgive sins; was He arrogating to Himself the power of the All-Highest? Blasphemy?

The man still lay on the pallet.

Ah! was there not a vital connection between moral and physical evil; if this man's sins were forgiven should not the effect of them also be obliterated? He ought to be cured yet nothing had happened; he was still in his sins.

Jesus knew what was passing in their minds as well as if they had expressed their thoughts aloud.

"Why are you reasoning as you are doing? Which would *you* find it easier to do—to say 'Your sins are forgiven' or 'You are healed?' "

He paused, regarding them with an expression half-whimsical, half-ironic.

"It is true," He went on, "that none but God can forgive sins for it is His law that is broken. But I come from Him and I have His authority to show how He would act. I have the power to forgive sins, and that you may know I have . . ."

He turned to the man at His feet:

"Rise, take up your bed and go home."

The man leapt up straight and vigorous, walked a few steps, and then knelt and poured out a torrent of grateful thanks to his saviour. Jesus repeated the command to go. Rolling up his mat he shouldered it,

looked doubtfully at the roof, and then walked boldly down the steps into the court and squeezed his way out.

"Wonderful!" "A genuine sign!" "Glory be to God for giving men such power!" and similar exclamations came from the excited throng as they went streaming out after him.

"What is it? What has happened?" cried those in the street.

"We have heard and seen strange things to-day! Nothing has ever been done before like this! Jesus claims to forgive our sins as well as heal our diseases!"

SPIES

Men in many lines of life were caught by the potent spell of Jesus: the breath of the spirit blew in unexpected quarters. A young Jewish fiscal officer of Capernaum named Matthew, having charge of the custom house on the Damascus road—the busiest in Palestine since it was one of the world's most crowded international avenues of commerce—had frequently seen Him passing to and from the Lakeside and had attended several of His meetings, affording cynical entertainment to his compatriots, for he was the most unpopular man in the city. Galilean Jews paid, more or less willingly, the tribute levied for the upkeep of the Temple and other religious purposes, but they resented, even more than the Judeans, the civil taxation and dues imposed on behalf of the Roman Government; it was a sign of their national subjection to the foreign power and they despised and hated those of their own race who undertook the task of collecting them. The duties also obliged these to work on the Sabbath and so prevented them from fulfilling the re-

quirements of the Law; all publicans, as these revenue agents were called, were treated as sinners, religious outcasts, and ostracised by the orthodox community. Matthew was shrewd and capable with an intelligent and tolerant outlook on life. Jesus had noticed his attentive and earnest demeanour and more than once had spoken to him and found that he was cherishing ideals which were leading him away from the formalism of his co-religionists. One evening, on returning from the shore, He saw him superintending the examination of caravan goods from the East. It was towards closing-time. As He passed He noticed that Matthew had stopped his inspection and was watching Him with a somewhat wistful expression. He saluted him and their eyes met.

"Come, Matthew," said Jesus invitingly. "Come and be my disciple."

It was what Matthew had been subconsciously waiting for. His face glowed as if his spirit had flashed up at the words. Turning to his men he told them to carry on and finish the work, and there and then he abandoned his business life and prospects and joined the little group round Jesus. The important official became the humble disciple.

Being well-to-do he had many friends among his colleagues and those who were under the ban of the church, and these he invited to a banquet which he gave to announce and signalise his decision. Jesus and His disciples were the guests of honour. The affair caused some stir and brought scribes and pharisees on the scene more censorious than ever. During public receptions the court of a house was free to all and they waylaid some of the disciples as they were passing through.

"This is shameful," they declared, "your Teacher is

eating and drinking with tax-gatherers and law-breakers. He cannot be so holy as He represents Himself to be!"

They had no answer ready but repeated the words to Jesus who went out and accosted the group.

"You are surprised that I am attending this feast? Why should I not? If these are sinners should I not come and reveal myself to them and try to save them? Men who are strong and well do not need a physician but only those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous to repent but sinners. It is the work God has given me to do and I must do it without respect of persons or regard for place. The true physician goes everywhere without fear of pollution or infection."

They were not satisfied: a lifetime of pious training and obedience to the letter of the Law lay behind their attitude and they could not readily adapt themselves to such revolutionary ideas. They discussed the situation with the followers of John who were numerous in Galilee and noted for their asceticism, many of them fasting for two days every week. A deputation of these came to Jesus when He was teaching the people and asked Him frankly why He and His disciples feasted and they and the pharisees fasted and prayed?

"Because," He said, "life is a glad and joyous thing and fasting is a sign of mourning. Did you see the marriage party to-day? Surely it would have ill befitted the guests to weep and mourn? It is only when death comes that one laments and fasts and it is natural then. My followers are rejoicing now because they are with the bridegroom; the day will come when He will no longer be with them and then they will be sorrowful."

It was another of the homely pictorial replies which were so different from the laboured arguments to

which they were accustomed. He did not condemn fasting if it were expedient and satisfied the emotional life, but He did not enjoin it as a practice, knowing how easily it lapsed into a form destitute of spiritual value.

Addressing the crowd generally He went on:

"Do you think that I do not understand and sympathise with you? You have been brought up on a system hoary with age. No man who is accustomed to drink old wine takes at once to new; 'the old is better,' he says. That is the conservative feeling in human nature. But changes must come: new ideas germinate and grow. I am giving the world a new spiritual order, liberating the soul from thoughtless adherence to the old forms. It is like new wine. You do not put new wine into old bottle-skins because it would ferment and burst the skins and the wine would be lost. It has to be put into new skins. So with the good news I bring. It cannot fit into your traditional beliefs: if I tried to make it do so both would suffer. Have you ever seen worn clothes being mended with pieces of new strong cloth? No, for these would tear the old garments and the rents would be made worse."

To some the reasoning was clear and they went away thoughtful, but others shook their heads and jerked their thumbs significantly towards the pharisees and scribes. These remained unmoved and were increasingly determined to oppose this young reformer and preserve the existing conditions. They continued to spy upon Him in order to secure further evidence of His defiance of the Law.

One Sabbath in spring He and His disciples were walking on the outskirts of the city along the narrow paths which divided the fields: the sunlight was glow-

ing on the ripening wheat, a soft wind blew in from the Lake, birds were fluttering about feeding on the grain, bees were humming among the wayside blossoms; all nature was vital and bright, at work yet at rest in God's good way: but in the city humanity was lounging in idle languor or walking with slow and unnatural constraint, soul and body held in check by artificial regulations and the dread of penalties. Only the swallows threaded the streets in swift and joyous motion.

Within a Sabbath day's journey pharisees stood covertly observing Jesus as He approached. They saw the disciples snatch at the ears of wheat as they passed, rub a few in the palms of their hands, blow the chaff away, and throw the kernels into their mouths. It was a harmless act sanctioned by custom, but on such a day it constituted an infringement of the Sabbath law: it involved the three processes of reaping, threshing and winnowing, and these were forbidden. Unconscious of the childishness of the enactment these grave men challenged Jesus when He drew near. There was a new edge on their speech:

"Why do your disciples act unlawfully on the Sabbath day?"

A slow smile of amusement passed over His face giving place to compassion. Was it worth while to speak to them again of the true principles of living? But with His never-failing patience He endeavoured to meet them in the way they could understand:

"You stand by the Law. Very well. Have you never read how the Law was disregarded in the face of human need? You remember how your hero David flying from Saul ate of the sacred bread in the Temple on a Sabbath day? You know also how the priests

work on the Sabbath and are not counted guilty. But here is One who is greater than the Temple. The Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath."

To this astonishing pronouncement they gave no reply: they simply stared. Then with one of His swift unveilings of the truth He said:

"Certainly you must have a Sabbath of pause and rest and reflection. Except you keep the Sabbath you will not see the Father. But you put the soul into the position of a bondservant of unreason. The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. There are higher laws than those of your race. It is not sacrifice which God requires so much as mercy and charity and kindness. If you knew this you would not condemn men who are guiltless of evil."

He passed on leaving them humiliated and angry, but with new evidence against Him. Nevertheless it was not enough and they laid a trap to obtain more. Aware that He was to address the synagogue they secured a man whose right hand was atrophied through some nervous disease. It was not an urgent case; there was no danger of his dying for want of medical attention, and hence no justification for breaking the Law on his behalf. They put him forward in a conspicuous place in the building and stood by and waited.

Jesus noted the man and then His quick glance fell on the crafty faces of the pharisees and He knew what they had done.

"Rise up and come forward," he said to the man, who obeyed.

Turning to the group near Him He asked them:

"Is it right on the Sabbath day to do good or to do evil—to save life or to destroy it?"

It was a thrust which cut into the complexities of the legal code and laid bare the truth. But they were wary

and would not commit themselves. They gloomed at Him and held their peace. He asked again:

"If any man among you owned a sheep and it fell into a pit on the Sabbath day would you not lift it out?"

No answer.

"Is a man not of more value than a sheep, and may he not be healed on the Sabbath day?"

Still silence.

His face shadowed. Their callousness, their lack of ordinary humanity, roused His indignation. Slowly, with that terrible finality to which they were becoming accustomed, He said:

"It is lawful to do well on the Sabbath day."

Then to the man:

"Stretch out your hand."

With an effort he held it up and instantly it lost its shrunken and withered appearance and became round and plump and natural. Cries of wonder, delight, and admiration came from the congregation.

Jesus looked quietly at the sullen group. Would the Divine love and pity thus so plainly expressed not touch and soften their own shrunken hearts? He saw signs only of blind passion and a menacing hate. Wrapping their robes about them they swept out of the building.

The challenge He had thrown down they must accept. It was they who were the recognised leaders and guides of the nation, and yet the people were actually running after this young agitator. If His power were not curbed there was no saying where the matter would end. "Let us consult the Herodians," they said, "and represent that there is a possibility of public disorder."

The Herodians were the party favourable to the

Government and opposed to nationalist movements. It was a strange alliance for pharisees to seek but they were not overscrupulous in their methods when any advantage could be gained.

Jesus had no mind to be the victim of their plotting: He had very much yet to accomplish, and to avoid further friction and open conflict He withdrew from the city to the eastern reaches of the Lake. Here came to Him chiefly those who were friends and followers, and for a time He was free from annoying tactics and intrigues.

His fame had now extended far beyond the limits of the country; and from the Arabian desert, the Phœnician seacoast, Idumea in the south, and the northerly regions of Syria came men and women of every station and type and mingled with the natives; dreamers seeking for Divine light; loyalists who hoped for a great nationalist revolt, young, eager, restless spirits dissatisfied with the barren nature of current religion; many wounded in life's battle longing for rest and peace; others weak and ailing who had heard that He possessed a wonderful power of healing; not a few simply out of curiosity; along with a horde of mercenary hucksters and pedlars making the most out of the vast gatherings. Wherever He stood or sat they surged round Him, pressing upon His disciples as they formed a protective circle, asking Him questions, appealing for help, or breathlessly watching Him perform cures.

The jostling, perspiring crowds, the bands of invalids, the carrier animals, the tents and booths and stalls, the streams of people coming and going along the paths, Jews and foreigners, rich and poor, sinners and saints, composed a scene of picturesque confusion, but it was one alien to the simple nature of the disci-

ples, and they began to fear for Jesus. They did not know that He was the calmest man in Palestine. His progress was similar to that of a cyclone in the natural world, which while it storms forward, a mass of whirling agitation, is dead calm at the centre. Jesus at the centre of this tremendous religious ferment remained perfectly tranquil in spirit.

But the restriction on His movements was so great that He asked Simon to obtain a boat to enable Him to proceed more freely and easily from point to point. Even with this means of escape His liberty was not always secured, for the people would watch the course which the craft took, and ere He was long at a place there arrived a panting, eager crowd. The boat also became His pulpit: from it He taught more frequently now than from the platform of the synagogues. It came to be known as the boat of the "good tidings," the "gospel" boat.

THE VOICE OF AUTHORITY

While the Divine power in Him was inexhaustible His human energies were limited and He was unable to cope with the expanding work. His few personal adherents were still raw and ignorant, and although they assisted Him in many ways they had no status beyond that of pupils. It was necessary to add to their number and to constitute a body of disciples to whom, after sufficient training, He could delegate authority and whom eventually He could send out as accredited agents to disseminate His teaching.

He had scores of general followers of all types who were ready to take up the task; these He had been studying carefully. There was no preference in His mind for rich or poor, cultured or illiterate, since social

position and learning were external to character: what He desired were young men of simple nature, open-minded, truth-loving, courageous, whose ideals were unfettered by traditional thought and who were willing to adventure on the pioneer path of religious reform. It was not an easy task even for Him, for men were masters of their own souls; they possessed the privilege of shaping their own destinies and no one could foresee how they would ultimately develop. Despite all that His training, influence and fellowship might do for them one or other might prove a weakling or worse. All might grow from strength to strength and yet in the strain of some sudden crisis, some overwhelming attack of evil forces, might break down and fail Him.

To think the matter out and obtain the guidance of His Father He retired one night into the starry silence of the hills and spent the hours in prayer. In the early morning, as soon as His followers had gathered He signalled to them to come up; and when they were about Him, a great throng, He explained the purpose in His mind; and mentioning the names of those whom He had chosen He asked them if they would dedicate themselves to His service. As one by one they responded He called them to His side.

They were all young men. First came Simon—now often being called Peter—who advanced with impulsive alacrity, his strong fine face alight with pleasure at the honour the Master had done him; he was of sturdy build, independent to roughness, temperate, frugal. Next came his brother Andrew, less robust mentally, but kind, steadfast, and modest; and the other brothers James and John, two eager impetuous natures, the latter an idealist with a touch of mysticism and one whom Jesus specially liked. Then followed

Philip, practical and capable; his friend Nathanael sometimes called Bartholomew, simple-hearted and guileless; and Matthew, business-like and broad-minded.

These were already companions of Jesus whom He knew intimately and could trust. He glanced round again and called Thomas, quiet and serious, whose temperamental pessimism did not lessen his loyalty; James the son of Alphæus (otherwise Cleopas); Thaddæus; Simon the Zealot; and, finally, Judas Iscariot, clever, active, ambitious, the only non-Galilean of the lot, his native place being on the uplands of southern Judea.

Twelve in all, a convenient number to teach and company with in city or country, and all common men. Not one possessed an academic training; all had received only the ordinary synagogue education. Each, however, could speak Greek as well as his native Aramaic. But they had a sense of religion and were upright, clean-living, aspiring—sound and promising material, Jesus thought, as He looked upon them with affection and pride.

To the others who stood disappointed and silent He spoke kind and gracious words, telling them of the equally important and honourable work they had to do, to be His missionaries and witness for the truth in their own spheres; and so potent was His influence that all ill-feeling disappeared and there was created in their hearts a new warmth of devotion and a finer ideal of service.

"Come," He said, and led them down to a level place where He directed the crowd to arrange themselves in a semi-circle and grouped the Twelve about Him as He seated Himself upon a boulder on higher ground. The stir and murmuring ceased; a sense of calm and peace and leisure fell upon them; all minds

were tuned to the spirit of the occasion. Close and reverent attention was paid to the words which fell slowly and quietly from His lips and were heard with ease in the clear morning air. None hung upon them so intently as the Twelve; in their exalted mood what He said made a deep impression, so that in after days they were able to picture the scene with the precision of actuality and recall the clear-cut phrases word by word.

"All men desire to know the true way to happiness. I will tell you the way and you will tell it to others.

"Happy are they who are poor and humble in mind, for they know what it is to belong to the Kingdom of Heaven; happy are they who mourn, for they will be comforted; happy are the gentle and meek, for it is they who in the true sense will inherit the earth; happy are all who long to be good, for they will be satisfied; happy are the merciful, for they will obtain mercy; happy are the pure in heart, for it is such who see God; happy are the peacemakers, for they will be ranked as the beloved sons of God; happy are they whom men reproach and hate and ostracise and say evil things against falsely for my sake, let them rejoice for great is their reward in heaven. All good men who seek the truth and proclaim it are so persecuted."

He paused and His tone changed to one of warning:

"Unhappy are the rich whose faith is in their riches alone, for they have all that they will ever get out of life; unhappy are those who are content with self-indulgence and empty laughter, for they will hunger and weep; unhappy are they whom all men flatter, for the judgment of the crowd is superficial and fickle, and popularity fades."

Again He paused and again He spoke:

"You, my disciples, are the salt of the earth, but take care; if the salt loses its saltness how can it be seasoned again?—it is good for nothing except to be thrown out and trodden under foot. Keep therefore the savour of goodness fresh in your life. Be at peace with each other."

Pointing to the white houses of Safad on the mountain heights, He continued:

"A city set on a hill cannot be hid. You are the lights of the world. Men when they light a lamp do not place it in a cellar or under a bushel-measure or bed, but up on the lamp-stand where it lights all the home. So let your light shine before men that they may see the good you do and be drawn also to your Father in heaven."

By this time the general public were straggling up the hill and quietly joining the gathering, and they also fell under the spell of His grave and thrilling speech.

"You have heard many things in the synagogue regarding the requirements of the law. It was said of old 'Thou shalt not kill,' but *I* say to you that every one who is angry with his brother is guilty of evil in the sight of Heaven and will incur Divine judgment. If therefore when you are offering gifts to God you remember that you have fallen out with your brother, leave your gifts and go and be reconciled to him and then you will make your offering with a clean heart.

"You have also heard how it used to be said, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery,' but *I* give you a higher law. Every one who looks upon a woman with wrong desire in his heart has already committed the offence with her, for life is one and the law of God applies to the imagination as well as to outward deeds. Therefore take care; discipline your mind and body; it is better that part of your nature should perish than that the

whole of it should be destroyed as if it were thrown into gehenna."

Gehenna, or "the hell of fire," was the furnace in which the refuse of Jerusalem was burned and was to the Jews a symbol of future punishment. His hearers were quick to catch the allusion and some of them recalled John the Baptist's frequent reference to fire. But if this was the law of the new Kingdom who could enter or remain in it!

"If there is anything in your nature which hinders you from living the highest life, do away with it at all cost. That is the true form of sacrifice. If, so to speak, your hand or foot lead you to offend against the love-law, cut them off; it is better to enter into a fuller life maimed than to keep hands or feet and go into gehenna. And if your eye causes you to offend, pluck it out and cast it away; it is better to enter life with one eye than be thrown into gehenna with two. Every disciple is salted with the fire of sacrifice.

"Again you have heard it said that one desirous of divorcing his wife on any pretext need only hand her a certificate to that effect; but *I* give you the ultimate law of God which alone holds good in the Kingdom; divorce is sinful, and both she who is divorced and marries again and he who marries her are made to commit adultery.

"Another of the laws of the old days is 'You shall not break the oaths or violate the vows you make to God but perform them'; but *I* say, do not use oaths in any form; they are not necessary for those who love and obey God and always mean what they say; let your word be 'yes' or 'no'; more than that is evil."

This to men who used the most tortuous methods of expressing themselves and to whom swearing was a natural element of speech!

"You have heard of the old law of retaliation; 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth,' but *I* say to you, resist not evil with evil but only with good."

But this was impossible! They gazed at Him in bewilderment. He went calmly on:

"Like unto this old saying was the injunction that you should love your neighbour but hate your enemy, but *I* say to you, love your enemies, do good to them that hate and curse you, suffer the conduct of those who ill-use you; requite them with good, pray for them. Whatever you would that men should do to you, do you even so to them. For if you love them that love you what virtue is there in that? Sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to them that do good to you what virtue is there in that? Even sinners do the same. Love in the same way as you should give or lend—without thought of return—for if you lend to them from whom you hope to receive, what do you more than others? Sinners lend in order to receive an equivalent. Follow rather the way of God who makes His sun to shine on the evil and the good and sends rain on the just and the unjust. If therefore you wish to be the beloved sons of God love your enemies, do them good, never despair of them; so will you be perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect."

Every mind was alert trying to grasp the extraordinary nature of this new teaching with its simple but devastating implications, its complete reversal of the traditional principles that guided their daily lives.

As He paused there came from the rear an exclamation in a tone of remonstrance.

"Lord, that is the goal you are showing us, but we want to know the way to it."

He raised His hand to still the sudden approving

murmur which broke out, and again there was breathless attention:

"It *is* the way. The gate, without doubt, is narrow and the path itself difficult and so few have the courage to enter, though it leads to that spiritual goal which men desire. There is another way where the gate is wide and the path broad and easy and many drift into it, but it leads to destruction."

"But, Lord, Lord?" another voice began. . . .

"Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not the things I say? Listen: every one who hears my words and acts upon them is like a wise man who digged deep and built his house upon a rock so that when the rain descended and the floods came and the winds blew and beat vehemently upon it, it was unshaken and did not fall for it was founded upon a rock. On the other hand every one who hears my teaching and does not act upon it is like a foolish man who built his house upon sand; when the rains descended and the floods came and the winds blew and beat vehemently upon it, it fell, and great was the ruin of it."

He ceased, His words dying away in the golden stillness like the passing of soft wind; and then He rose, indicating that He had finished. Immediately the hillside became a moving mass of humanity, excited and voluble. Those who talked most were the outsiders. "He certainly speaks as one with authority," some admitted, "and yet how differently from the scribes!" Others expressed frank delight at the freshness and vigour of His teaching; while not a few shook their heads and hinted that it was sheer nonsense.

But all followed Him down the hillside attracted, despite doubts and reservations, by the force of His unique personality.

THE GIFT OF LIFE

No sooner had He returned to Capernaum than He was waited upon by a deputation of the lay representatives, or elders, of the local synagogue on behalf of a military officer stationed in the city, one who, although a pagan, was held in respect by the community; an earnest, broad-minded man.

"A worthy person indeed," said the Jews earnestly, anxious to impress Jesus, "he is very friendly to us; moreover it was he who built us our fine synagogue."

"And what does he desire?" asked Jesus.

"He knows how you healed the officer's son when you were at Cana. One of his favourite boy-slaves has fallen ill and seems to be dying. He begged us to come to you and appeal for your medical help."

"Am I to go to him?" asked Jesus pointedly.

The officer had not gone so far as that; his faith was greater than theirs, but they, still commonplace materialists, could not imagine any other course and they replied in the affirmative.

"I will go and heal him," He said.

Runners were sent back advising the officer that Jesus was coming. This was more than he had asked and expected; instantly he dispatched some of his personal friends to intercept Jesus. When they met Him they gave the message in what they said were the officer's own words:

"Lord, I am sorry you have put yourself to this trouble. I counted myself unworthy to come to you; neither am I worthy that you should come under my roof. I believed that you could heal the boy where you were. Even I, an ordinary man under authority, have soldiers to whom I have only to say 'go' and they go, or 'come' and they come, 'do this' and they

do it; and you with your power and authority need only say the word and my servant will be healed."

Jesus listened and marvelled at the contrast presented by this pagan alien and the Jews. Here was a Gentile who possessed a clearer apprehension of the power of spiritual law than the people who had been trained in the truth for centuries; who believed absolutely in Him and His ability to save, and was kind and humble and considerate.

Turning to the elders and the crowd following Him He said:

"I tell you I have not come across such great faith, no, not even in Israel, your highly developed religious nation. Take you heed, the good news will spread to the heathen and many will believe and become citizens of the Kingdom while you who think you are God's chosen people will continue to sit in darkness."

He spoke to the messengers:

"You may return. Your friend's faith is justified. The boy is healed."

And it was so.

Jesus began at once the systematic training of the Twelve. As in the case of the first four He preferred to teach them on the road, and as it was summer and the heat was scorching on the Lake shore they left Capernaum and went on a tour of the towns and villages to the west. They passed slowly through the populous plain of Gennesaret, climbed the headlands, and descended into the plain of Esdraelon.

It was afternoon when He approached the walled village of Nain, built on an eminence near Mount Tabor and commanding a wide prospect of the valley. His little company had been augmented on the way and the hillside was covered with straggling groups of followers.

Near the entrance the sound of wailing came to their ears, and through the gateway poured a stream of people: it was a funeral procession on its way to the rock-tombs in the vicinity. In front walked a weeping woman; behind were others crying in the high staccato style of professional mourners; then, borne by men, the bier, an open frame of wickerwork on which lay the form of a young man, face and hands and feet wrapped in grave-bands; a long train of villagers made up the rear.

The two processions paused and regarded each other —the one full of life, eager and joyous; the other sad, dejected, bearing death in its midst. A whisper ran through the villagers. "It is Jesus the wonder-worker!" Figures detached themselves and came eagerly towards Him and poured out a story how the dead young man had been the only son and support of his mother who was a widow, and how promising a lad he had been. The mother stood sobbing. To Jesus, acutely sensitive to sorrow and suffering, each sob was like a blow. He turned to her:

"Do not weep," He said soothingly.

He walked up to the bier and stood looking down upon the still form.

A thrill passed over the throng; many crept noiselessly nearer, vaguely wondering and expectant.

A pure, strong voice rang out:

"Young man, I bid you rise!"

A movement like a shudder ran over the body; its rigid lines relaxed; the head stirred; the youth sat up, gazed into the face of Jesus, looked around, and seeing his mother smiled to her.

The spectators fell back terrified. The dead had come back to life! In awe they gazed from the young man to Jesus and from Jesus to the young man. They

were too amazed to express their feelings; only a gasp or a smothered exclamation broke the stillness.

The voice of Jesus ended the spell. He spoke naturally and pleasantly to the bearers:

"Set down the bier and remove the bands."

They did so, and taking the youth by the hand He presented him to his mother.

It was a simple act of Divine compassion well within the power of Jesus, but the people regarded it as a display of supernatural magic. The thoughts of some went back to the stories told of the old days when such miracles were said to have happened in that very district. Here was another prophet with power: surely God was working amongst them once more!

Reports of the incident spread from end to end of the country and set a thousand tongues discussing and speculating. Yet it left many unmoved, for men are largely indifferent to what lies beyond the range of their experience, while others shrugged their shoulders knowingly and muttered remarks about jugglery and dupes.

Echoes of the talk reached the unhappy John in his dungeon on the black rock of Tiberias. Accustomed to the freedom of the wilderness he was like a trapped creature of the wild: moods of weariness and depression fell upon him and he brooded and grew morbid. Why was Jesus so long in asserting His Divine authority and position and in introducing His Kingdom upon the earth: why was He wandering about teaching in an obscure way in country parts? Had he been in error in supposing Him to be the mighty one who was to sweep through the land like a scorching fire? Overcome on one occasion by gloom and doubt he asked two of his disciples—who were still allowed to pay him

an occasional visit—to go and question Jesus on the subject.

These found Him in the midst of the usual crowds. The scene resembled some great outdoor hospital, but He was healing souls as well as bodies.

"We have come from John the Baptist: he sent us to enquire if you are the one we have all been expecting or are we to look for another?"

Jesus understood. Behind the question He saw John in his cell, disappointed, restless, fretting, doubting.

"Go back to John," He replied in a kind, sympathetic voice, "and tell him what you see and hear; that the people are being healed; that the blind are made to see, the lame to walk, the deaf to hear; that the lepers are cleansed; that even the dead are brought back to life. And tell him also that the poor are having the good news of the Kingdom of love given to them, the poor for whose souls no man hitherto has cared. And tell him that happy will he be if he is not offended by my idea of the mission God has given me to do or by the methods I adopt. Finally, tell him," and His tone grew softer, "that his troubles will soon be over. . . . Again he will be my forerunner."

The two stern-featured messengers gravely saluted and left.

Jesus turned to the crowd who had been listening, consisting of disciples and townspeople and also of pharisees and scribes who were always hanging near.

"You heard what these men said? Some of you saw him baptising in the Jordan. What did you go there to see? A reed shaken by the wind?"

He paused and into their minds came a vision of a strong courageous man assailing the sins and follies of the age and calling upon men to repent.

"Come! What did you go out to see? A man arrayed in soft and beautiful robes?"

John! They thought of his rough single cloak of camel's skin and smiled.

"No! those who dress in gorgeous clothes and live delicately dwell in royal palaces."

Involuntarily many glanced across the Lake towards the towering palace of Herod.

The insistent voice came again.

"What did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, and much more than a prophet. For John was my herald sent by God to prepare the way for me. I tell you there is not a greater man in all the world than John. . . . And yet," He added, with one of His lightning-like revelations of truth which flashed out and left His hearers often in denser darkness than before, "the least in the Kingdom of God is greater than he."

Ere they had time to ponder the cryptic words He spoke again and to the pharisees:

"How was John's message received? The people believed it: even publicans accepted it and were baptised. But you, pharisees, and you, scribes, rejected it, and would not be baptised. I come with another form of gospel and do not baptise and you reject this also. What can I liken you to? You are like children playing at weddings and funerals in the market place. When your companions call, you refuse to do anything; they pipe to you and you do not dance: they wail and you do not weep. John came eating no bread and drinking no wine and you said he was possessed of a demon. I come eating and drinking and you say I am a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a friend of tax-gatherers and sinners! Truly," He concluded with

intense scorn, "wisdom is flattered and vindicated by her children."

A WOMAN WITH A TRAGIC FACE

Not all pharisees were antagonistic to Jesus. Some could not help being drawn to Him by the charm of His personality. Others were moved by His eloquence and honestly desired to examine His teaching. Not a few of the shrewd calculating kind kept friendly with Him from motives of self-interest—there was no saying what a teacher possessed of such wonderful gifts might become. A typical man of this order was Simon of Capernaum, able and ambitious, but essentially vulgar and snobbish, who courted the notice and favour of the distinguished. He had been speculating on the chances of Jesus proving an important personage in Palestine but was not sure of his ground. Wishing to study Him at close quarters he invited Him to dinner one evening.

That afternoon Jesus addressed a gathering on the outskirts of the city. It was one of the breathless days when the heat seemed to accumulate in the vast hollow of the Lake until it glowed like a furnace. There was no wind: the air was suffocating: all humanity felt the oppression and languor, and moved about with slow and heavy step. In the crowd which gathered around Him many types were represented: shopkeepers and artisans, clerks, labourers, slaves. Peasants returning from work had stopped to listen. Two oxen yoked neck to neck had been halted on the fringe; the heads of the animals were bowed to the ground; their driver was leaning against them as if in weariness. Women were there, good women pressing eagerly forward as

far as they dared, and women considered unfit for decent society standing aloof with tragic faces. It was a tired crowd: tired with the day's hot work in field and shop, tired also with the burden of a Law which gave them neither rest nor peace.

They were listening to words that fell upon their ears like the running of cool water with a grateful sense of comfort and healing. He spoke of the Father God and His desire for their happiness and the true way to obtain it; of Himself as one whom God had sent to make visible and clear His love and His way.

Stretching out His arms at the close in an attitude of appeal He said in a voice that seemed to draw out their inmost being in response:

"Come unto me all you who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest; take *my* yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find peace for your souls; for *my* yoke is easy and *my* burden light."

In a single sentence He had shown them the way to the rest and peace they craved.

"Come unto me. Come unto me," murmured a woman with a tragic face . . . "Rest . . . Peace."

Jesus went on to the dinner. There were other guests whom the host honoured in the customary way; they received the kiss of welcome; servants washed their dusty feet; their heads were anointed and perfumed. When Jesus appeared Simon was a little embarrassed. He wished to stand well in this man's eyes and yet, after all, what was He but a travelling evangelist of humble birth without credentials from the schoolmen, one whom it was a condescension on his part to entertain? Pride struggled with better feeling but pride won, and Jesus went into the dining-hall without receiving the ordinary courtesies. Ignoring the

omission He took the place assigned to Him, reclining on His left elbow on the cushioned couch, His sandalled feet towards the floor.

He was public property and it was always known where He was.

When a woman with a tragic face came stealing along the streets and asked where the Teacher was she was directed to Simon's house.

"Simon's," she exclaimed, her hand going to her heart. She hesitated, then a strange light flashed into her sorrowful eyes and she hastened on.

"Come unto me . . . Come unto me. . . ."

The words were beating in her brain and drawing her forward with overpowering force.

Reaching the house she found the door of the court open which indicated that she was free to enter. She passed into the dining-room. Servants and guests saw her, recognised her, and drew aside as from an unclean thing. To their astonishment she went straight to Jesus and stood behind Him shaking with emotion. "Rest . . . peace." The tears came, a penitential flood, and fell upon His feet. She saw them and, kneeling, swiftly undid her hair, a mute confession of her character, for only loose women were seen with it dishevelled. She took the long tresses and softly wiped away the tears, clung to the feet and kissed them repeatedly in a passion of abasement, remorse and appeal. With Divine understanding Jesus let her sob herself into quiet.

She rose and drew from her bosom a small alabaster phial which was suspended from her neck by a cord, and, withdrawing the stopper, stood for one brief instant hesitant—could she dare anoint His head with the unguent in the usual way? No! With a gesture of abject humility she knelt again and poured it over

His feet. The sweet aroma spread and perfumed the room.

Simon had noted her with a flash of recognition and uneasy remembrance in his startled eyes and stood watching the little drama with increasing amazement. His anger changed to contempt.

"Jesus," he said to himself, "is no prophet. If He possessed a prophet's insight He would know what sort of a woman she is. To suffer this from one of such ill-repute!" He felt that his cautious attitude and cool treatment had been justified.

But Jesus was looking towards him.

"Simon, I have something to say to you."

"Teacher," was the muttered reply, "say on."

"A certain money-lender had two debtors. One owed him ten times as much as the other. Neither had money and neither could pay. He forgave them both their debts. Which of them do you think would love him more?"

Simon thought rapidly, wondering where the catch was. But there was only one answer. "I suppose he to whom he forgave most."

"You are right. . . . Well, do you see this woman? When I entered your house you, a pharisee, provided no water to wash my feet, but she, a sinner, has bathed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss of welcome, but she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has poured all her precious store of ointment over my feet. . . ."

He paused and the silence was an accusation. Simon sat with flaming face; truly, he thought, this man had more insight than he had imagined.

Jesus went on, a harder note in His tone:

"Her sins are many, but, because they are, she will

love the more when they are forgiven. There are persons who keep the Law and are outwardly respectable and who love little because they think they have little or nothing to be forgiven."

He turned to the bowed form of the woman and His voice was again gentle.

"Your sins are forgiven."

The company were shocked and showed it. He was repeating the offence which He had once before committed. But this was a woman with the blackest of records, a creature of shame, fit only for hell's fire. How could a man cleanse such a life?

Again briefly and categorically He spoke:

"Your faith has saved you; go into peace."

And into peace she went.

He had bound another woman's heart to Himself; one of the many now in all classes of society whose lives He had touched and changed, whose bodies He had healed, whose spirits He had given a new vision of holiness.

In their gratitude and joy not a few of these women attached themselves to His company of disciples. It was not theirs to teach but they organised a service of love and thought and care for His bodily needs. Thenceforward He was never without the tender ministrations of women who contributed in no small measure to the smooth working of His plans and movements. Amongst them were several of rank and influence—Mary from Magdala, the wealthy manufacturing town on the north-west side of the Lake; Joanna, the wife of Chuza—Herod's house steward at Tiberias—Susanna, and others.

The rebuke to Simon widened the breach between Jesus and the stricter pharisees. Smarting under many similar incidents they reported to Jerusalem that the

situation was growing intolerable, and on the scene came a new set of ecclesiastics, sinister figures, who made enquiries, haunted the meetings of Jesus, and noted His statements.

One day there was led to Him that most pitiful of all objects—a man blind, and dumb, and insane. He was presented to Him as a piece of wrecked mechanism would have been handed to a master-mechanic.

"Cure that," was the unspoken challenge of those around. They knew as little of the fathomless power of Jesus as of His fathomless pity. He gave the man sight, speech and a sound mind. Already surfeited with wonder the people could do nothing but gaze with stupefaction at healer and healed.

"Can this after all be the son of David?" they cried, using the popular phrase for the messiah.

The heresy-hunters who were standing near turned upon them with fierce contempt.

"Do you know how this fellow is able to cast out demons? He is in league Himself with the devil who has given Him the power."

It was a new and startling thought and greatly impressed the ignorant people. They believed in demoniacal possession and the powers of evil, and they had faith in their own religious leaders. Casting fearful looks at Jesus they began volubly and earnestly to discuss the matter amongst themselves. Jesus knew the trend of their talk and motioning to them to listen He turned to the pharisees.

"How can the chief of devils cast out himself?" He enquired, using their own phraseology. "If a town or city or nation is divided against itself it cannot stand—you know that well from your political history. If the devil takes up arms against himself it is himself he destroys. He is like a strong man in a fortified

house who cannot be defeated until a stronger man enters the house and overcomes him. Then he can plunder the house. Do you not see that if I, with the power of God, cure these cases it is the Kingdom of Good that has come and not the Kingdom of Evil? Why condemn me when you do not condemn your own exorcists?"

He looked steadily for a moment into their angry, venomous faces potent with menace and added sharply,

"He that is not with me is against me and he that gathers not with me scatters."

It was a proverbial phrase and well known to them, and it proved the text of a solemn denunciation of their attempt to poison the minds of the people.

"Listen; in ranging yourselves against me and in stating that the Spirit of God is the prince of evil you are slandering Him, and there is no greater sin. Other sins will be forgiven but not that awful blasphemy. Well did John call you vipers. But what can one expect? A tree is known by its fruit; you do not gather figs from thorns nor grapes from a bramble bush; neither does a good tree bear unsound fruit nor one that is corrupt bear good fruit. How can you with your evil hearts say good things? It is out of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the treasures of his heart brings forth that which is good; whereas a man with an evil heart brings forth that which is evil. Speech is the witness of character; it reveals the state of your heart and by it you will be acquitted or condemned. I tell you that you will have to give an account of every idle, evil word you utter.

"Again; the light of the body is the eye; if your eye is good your whole body will be full of clear shining light, but if it be evil your body will be full of dark-

ness. Take heed that the light with which you imagine you are filled is not darkness—and if darkness how great it is!"

His hearers were beside themselves with anger; such a rebuke they had never received from the lips of man. Yet their wrath was shot with a nameless fear. Surely He must possess some authority unknown to them to speak like this? They choked down their indignation.

"Give us," they cried, "a sign to prove that you have the right to speak to us in this fashion—a special sign, a supernatural proof."

Jesus looked at them sadly and sighed.

"A sign from heaven? Why do you ask that? It is an evil and disloyal people that require such a sign and none will be given them except what they have in me. Read your scriptures. The men of Nineveh condemn you, for they repented at the preaching of Jonah and a greater than Jonah is here. Even the Queen of Sheba condemns you, for she came a thousand miles to listen to the wisdom of Solomon and a greater than Solomon is here. You are not satisfied with the spiritual message of a teacher sent direct from God and must have a special demonstration to cure your unbelief and gratify your craving for material marvels!"

They were completely silenced and disconcerted; and, conscious of failure, they backed away muttering.

Jesus turned towards the people who had been greatly excited by the encounter. His expression was still sad, for He detected signs of a reaction against Him, and from His knowledge of human nature He knew that the ebb might be swift and strong. His thoughts He voiced openly but veiled them in metaphor:

"When an unclean spirit has gone out of a man it wanders through dry places seeking rest, but finding

none it says, 'I will go back to the home I have left'; and when it comes it finds the home vacant, clean and in order. Then it goes in search of other spirits more wicked than itself and they all enter in and dwell there, and the last state of the man is worse than the first. So will it be with you."

And with that He walked off, leaving them to puzzle out His meaning.

TRUTH-PICTURES

This passage with the official leaders created a new interest in Jesus in Capernaum; reports became current that the authorities were holding meetings and formulating charges against Him as a necromancer, a subverter of the Law and tradition, a stirrer-up of social strife, and so forth, which had the effect of augmenting the crowds that gathered to see and hear Him. He was the sensation of the hour: the people literally took possession of Him, flocking round Him whenever He appeared, invading the houses which He frequented, giving Him neither peace nor leisure. He lived more than ever in a whirl of excitement. His disciples and friends endeavoured to detach Him from the mobs but He quietly ignored their importunities and kept on, unresting, unhasting, utilising every moment in the discharge of His mission.

There came a specially strenuous day when fears were expressed for His health. His younger brothers were appealed to but they shrugged their shoulders: they had no great faith in the Divine character of His ministry and were disturbed and annoyed with the notoriety into which the family had been dragged:

"We have no influence over Him," they said, "let us go and tell His mother."

To her they went. "He is beside Himself," they declared, "He has no time even for meals; He cannot bear up against this frenzied life."

Mary had been watching over Him with womanly care for His needs, and with pride and joy in His work, and she was not alarmed. She knew the deep-seated calm, the cool self-possession, the reserves of strength which lay behind His ceaseless activity. Nevertheless she accompanied them to the house where He was. The crush in the court was so great that they found it impossible to push their way through. A message was passed from mouth to mouth that the mother and brothers of the Teacher were outside wishing to speak to Him.

Jesus received it and as was His wont seized on the incident to enforce a truth:

"My mother and brethren? Who are they?"

He paused to let the question take effect and then swept His arm around:

"See, my mother and brethren; for every one who does the will of God is my mother and brother and sister. The family of my Father transcends earthly ties; it includes all who love Him and serve Him; they are knit together in the bonds of spiritual kinship."

Sister! Every woman in the crowd thrilled at the word. Jesus was raising them to a position they had never yet known. From the beginning they had been handicapped by physical disability and a feeling of inferiority, and now for the first time in their long and dreary pilgrimage they were being emancipated from the sense of sex and given a station in the world equal to that of men; were being lifted up to a higher and purer region.

A woman's cry, broken with emotion, rang out:

"Happy indeed is the woman who bore you and reared you!"

"Say rather happy are those who love God and obey Him," was His swift response.

He was not unconscious of the strain being put on His nervous system and took His own measures to ease it. Not often now did He teach in the congested areas of houses and synagogues: He preferred the open air for the constant movement and exercise which this involved. His favourite resorts were the little sandy bays which dented the shore. When the people gathered He entered the gospel boat, the disciples pushed it off a few yards, and He taught while sitting in the bows. Simon sometimes could not help thinking of the words He had used to them, "I will make you fishers of men," for here they were fishing for souls every day—and netting them.

Jesus met the people on the level of their own lives: He dealt with their homely trials and difficulties and at the same time lifted them to spiritual heights. He did not teach from the Law but from life. Any commonplace incident or remark furnished a text for the outpouring of a limpid stream of Divine truth.

One day in the early winter as He entered the boat He noticed, some distance away on the cultivated land, a peasant sowing a field, flinging the seed to right and left on the rich brown earth. Other fields were showing the delicate green of young shoots.

"See," He said, "the sower sowing his seed. Listen to a parable. A sower went out to sow. As he sowed, some seed fell on the roadway and the birds came and ate it up. Other seed fell on stony soil where there was not much earth, and it shot up; but when the sun rose it was scorched and withered away because it had

no deep roots. Other seed fell on thorny ground, and the thorns sprang up and choked it and it bore no crop. But other seed fell on good soil and gave a crop that grew to harvest and yielded a handsome return. Do you understand? Think it out and apply it to yourselves."

It was a familiar and vivid picture and impressed itself on the minds of His hearers who discussed it with animation. But He did not offer to explain its meaning, and this struck His disciples as singular. When the audience had broken up they asked Him why He had spoken in such a way.

"Because these people are so ignorant that they do not understand what I say to them. They need to have their attention and interest aroused, to have things put to them in pictorial form; they can see pictures but not abstract truth. The birds of the heaven and every creature on the earth and in the sea, these are what will draw them into the Kingdom."

They hesitated a little and then Simon said:

"Teacher, what is the meaning of the parable?"

Jesus looked His surprise.

"Did you not understand it? Then how are you going to understand the others that I shall give?"

Their eyes fell abashed.

"Do you not see that the sower is any one who sows the truth. It may fall into the kind of mind which is open to every impression, but when other influences come they sweep it away. It may fall on a superficial, emotional nature who accepts it with enthusiasm but it soon withers under the stress of difficulty or trial. It may fall on hearts that welcome it, but gradually worldly cares and preoccupations or the achievements and distractions of riches completely choke it. But when it falls on receptive, earnest minds

it takes firm root, grows and bears fruit in a rich life of love and service."

Parable illustrations, like little colour vignettes, became frequent in His addresses and were often remembered when their context was forgotten because of their familiar association and appeal. When asked on one occasion the question that was often put to Him—what the Kingdom He spoke of was to be like—He replied:

"The Kingdom of Heaven is like a man who sowed good wheat seed in his field, but during the night the enemy came secretly and sowed the noxious darnel grass. When the wheat grew up the darnel came also. The servants of the man were surprised and went to him and said: 'Did you not sow good wheat? Look at the field—full of darnel!' 'Ah,' he said, 'this has been done by the enemy.' 'Shall we go and weed it out?' 'No, there is too much; you might root up the wheat with it. Let both grow together until the harvest when they can be separated and the darnel grass burnt.' "

The disciples were again unable to understand the meaning of what He said and asked Him to explain.

"Do you not see that I am the sower and that the field is the world, and the good seed those who are good, and the darnel those who are evil? They cannot be distinguished and separated now, but in the end they will be, and the good will receive their reward and the evil theirs. When you fishers used to cast your net into the Lake and gather in a catch you found all sorts of fish in it; but on the beach you picked out the good and threw the bad away. So it is with the Kingdom."

Other parables following on these were so simple that they had no difficulty in discerning their application. Speaking again one day of the Kingdom He said

it was like a tiny grain of mustard seed which grew into a tree in which the birds could lodge, which meant, they knew, that His gospel of good news would spread throughout the world and become a faith for all people.

On another occasion He likened it to leaven which a woman took and baked with her meal with the result that the whole in time was leavened. So it would be with the truth He was giving them: it would in the end leaven the whole life of humanity.

"You make this Kingdom out to be a very precious thing," some one remarked to Him.

"It is," was the reply. "It is like a treasure that is hidden in a field. A man found it and rejoiced and hid it again. Then he went and sold all his property and goods and came back and bought the field so that he might possess the treasure. Again, a merchant, seeking for fine pearls, came across one of exceeding beauty. So delighted was he with it that he went and sold all he possessed and bought it. The Kingdom is like the pearl."

Turning to His disciples He said:

"Do you understand these things?"

"Yes, Teacher," they replied.

IN A LAKE STORM

After an exhausting day of selfless service Jesus was tired. He looked on the shore alive with people and the roads thronged with those coming and going and then across the tranquil Lake to the eastern slopes. There in the ravines He would find silence and rest. It was only the "first evening," or about three o'clock, and there would be time to go and return by nightfall.

"Let us go to the other side," He said to the dis-

ciples, and they, nothing loth, made ready. Jesus went to the stern and sat on the cushion-covered seat. The fisher-disciples rowed out into the open and raised the sails. A bustle on the beach drew their attention: the eager people were commandeering the other boats lying at anchor, were crowding into them, and following in their wake.

As the sails caught the breeze and the boat rippled forward Jesus lay back on the cushion, body and mind relaxing in wholesome weariness. Within a few minutes the gentle swaying and the sound of lapping water lulled Him to sleep. In low tones the disciples talked of the marvellous endurance and serenity of their Teacher.

Suddenly the man at the helm whose vigilant eye had been roving over the Lake stood up and gazed intently towards the north-east. The sky above was clear, the hillsides were enveloped in a heat haze, the surface of the water was glittering and the air above it flickering, but near the mouth of the Jordan he had caught sight of a white ruffling movement which seemed to be advancing rapidly in their direction.

A warning cry came from his lips and the others sprang to their feet. He pointed and they understood. It was one of the swift rushes of cold air which, sucked down through the narrow gorges, swept on to the hot Lake, converting it into a scene of tempestuous fury. The men in the other boats behind saw it also, and with much shouting and gesticulation turned and raced for the shore.

The fisher-disciples possessed more faith and courage than in the old days: after a hasty consultation and a glance at the sleeping figure they decided to carry out His wish and kept straight on. Lowering the sails they took to the oars and headed their craft to

the oncoming peril. With startling abruptness the water in front leaped into agitation, a hurricane of wind burst upon them, the waves rose and broke against the boat and drenched them with spray. Skilful handling kept them in position but the conditions grew wilder: one moment they were pitched violently to the crest of a wave, the next drawn into the hollow: sheets of green water curled over and flooded the boat and only frantic baling kept it from sinking.

Through the roar of the storm and the cries and the confusion Jesus slept. They looked at Him, wondering, for on His face was the calm of perfect peace. They were reluctant to disturb Him but waken Him they must.

"Teacher! Teacher!" they cried.

He slept on. They touched Him:

"Teacher! Teacher!"

He awoke and sat up with untroubled gaze and mien.

"We are perishing," they cried reproachfully. "Do you not care that we drown?"

He did not reply but rose and with the same tranquil expression stood and faced the wind-tormented, seething waters, His white headdress and cloak flying in the blast; and as if rebuking the evil forces that had been let loose He raised His hand:

"Peace. Be still!"

Instantly the raging wind fell muttering to a calm, the wild sea sobbed itself to rest, and the boat rocked quietly in the swell.

He turned to the men.

"Why," He asked, "were you afraid? Where was your faith? Why did you not trust yourselves to God . . . after all these days with me!"

They were shrinking and cowering in awe and fear

before Him, overcome by this new manifestation of His power. The fishers amongst them knew how fierce and uncontrollable the agencies of nature were, how cruel and pitiless and inhuman were the wind and the waves. To cure a sick man, even to restore a dead one, might be possible according to some law unknown to them, was indeed possible for they had seen these done; but to master and command the lawless forces of elemental matter—that they had conceived was beyond the range even of His tremendous power. What manner of man was this whom the very winds of heaven and the waves of the sea obeyed?

Here, again, was the innocent assumption that the mechanical forces of the world were more potent than the spiritual. The disciples were amazed that the influence of God would govern and control His own creation.

When they recovered their wits they took the oars and rowed towards the nearest land. Geresa, a heathen town, lay on the foreshore on the left, but avoiding it they beached at a point south of a projecting spur which came down to within a few yards of the edge of the water.

Their coming had not been unobserved. Among the stony foothills which were given over to herds of swine—"unclean abominations" in the eyes of the Jews —were numerous caves of rock-tombs haunted in popular imagination by the spirits of the dead. Here dwelt in enforced isolation a maniac, a former soldier, who had come to the last pass of his malady. Beyond control or restraint, untamable, impossible to chain, for with a giant's strength he broke every fetter fastened upon him, he had been abandoned by his friends to the loneliness of this defiled and desolate spot, about which he roamed, a fearsome creature, naked and powerful,

moaning and crying, and cutting himself with sharp flints. Even the rough swine-herds dare not go near him.

With restless, blood-shot eyes he had watched the scene on the Lake, the onset of the storm, the peril of the boat, the white figure in the stern, the sudden cessation of the gale, the approach and landing; and in his disordered brain there entered a dim ray of apprehension; this must be the wonder-worker of whom even he had heard, the enemy of the demon-possessed, the healer of madmen, the saviour of lost souls. He was shaken with vague, unreasoning fear; all the foul forces of unreason rallied in a mighty effort and with a terrible cry he bounded down the hill to the beach, a formidable, bestial figure which made the disciples gasp and drew them together in defensive position around Jesus.

He leaped, rather than ran, towards them. As he drew near it seemed as if some mysterious influence caught him and held him, for he suddenly stopped and fell to the ground clawing the air and mouthing and raving.

The swine-herds had also noted the strangers arriving and the madman rushing down, and curious to witness what would happen they gave a hasty glance at their herds and seeing them feeding quietly they made their way rapidly to the shore.

The lunatic found his voice:

"You are Jesus. What have I to do with you? Have you come also to torment me? I adjure you trouble me not."

"What is your name?" said Jesus, seeking to calm him.

He threw up his arms. Some confused sense of a

host of evil impulses working in him and driving him on flashed athwart his consciousness.

"Legion," he cried—using the military term for a large body of soldiers. He began to froth and rave again. Jesus regarded him with a measureless compassion. So low could human nature fall. But even the vilest and most degraded could by the power of God be re-created. He raised his hand.

"I bid all evil to leave you. I bid you be healed," He said very gently.

The swine-herds who had drawn closer and were watching fascinated saw the man shudder and rise. They cried aloud in amazement. In the twinkling of an eye he had been transformed: the light of reason had returned; he looked mild, intelligent, wholesome.

Jesus directed one of the disciples to give him a cloak and this he gratefully received and with it covered his body.

At that moment one of the herds, remembering his charge, turned and uttered a cry of dismay. His companions followed his gaze and saw that the swine, left to themselves, had wandered, in the rapid way they do when feeding, and were on the brow of the steep spur overhanging the Lake.

They rushed off gesticulating and shouting confused directions to each other to turn the animals back from the crest. They were obliged to climb the slope a little way behind, and hearing the cries and seeing the flying forms making their way towards them the herd was seized with panic and with a jerk of their snouts they moved forward in a massed body, dashed blindly down the descent, and, unable to save themselves, plunged struggling into the Lake and were drowned.

The keepers were petrified with horror at the catas-

trophe. They had been unfaithful to their duty. What excuse could they give for their negligence? Consulting together they agreed to lay the blame on the strangers. Devils they believed had been expelled from the madman—what more likely than that they had entered into the swine? They made for the town and gave their masters a highly-coloured account of the incident.

So remarkable a story spread like wildfire, and in a short time an excited crowd reached the scene where they found the maniac sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind, and talking quietly and rationally; and in the Lake the floating bodies of the swine. They were impressed by the salvation of the man but felt a superstitious fear of Him who had wrought the change and asked Him bluntly to leave their coast. Understanding their natural vexation and not wishing to antagonise them further He returned to the boat with His disciples. As He entered, the restored man begged earnestly to accompany Him as a disciple.

"No," said Jesus, "rather go back to your friends and tell them what God has done for you. Be my disciple in your own country. That will be more difficult than coming with me. To be my missionary in your home, in your daily sphere, diffusing the light of truth among your own people—that is a great work for you to do."

"I will do it, Teacher," he replied with the soldier's habit of obedience. . . .

And he kept his word. Through him many came to know and believe in Jesus throughout the pagan district of Decapolis.

A GIRL WHO DIED AND LIVED

There was now no hope of securing a quiet hour elsewhere; the western shore was already in shadow and they set sail for Capernaum which they reached ere the darkness fell. A crowd of people waited for them on the shore, eager to question the disciples on their experiences. One man who had been walking impatiently up and down approached Jesus and saluted. Jesus knew him; he was Jairus, the president of the synagogue and one of the deputation who had appealed to Him in connection with the centurion's boy. Now he had come on his own behalf. Proud Jew though he was he bowed low before Jesus.

"What now, Jairus?"

"My little daughter is dying. I pray you come and lay your hands upon her that she may live."

Jesus gave him a searching look. This Jew had not the faith of the centurion. But knowing most of the children of the town He recalled the twelve-year-old girl, her bright brown face, her sparkling eyes, her merry laugh, and pitied the distress of the man.

"Lead on," He said, and they proceeded to the town, the excited people, expecting some new manifestation of power, surging around them.

In the struggling throng was entangled a delicate-looking woman who yet seemed to be there with a purpose. She was a stranger who had been visiting the baths at Tiberias in the hope of obtaining relief from a chronic hæmorrhage which had for twelve years made her life a misery. No doctor had been able to cure her; she had spent all her means in consulting them; many forms of magical treatment had failed; charms and incantations had proved worse than useless; and having heard of Jesus, here she was, cere-

monially unclean and repugnant to all, knowing that her touch was defilement yet so desperate in her need that she was indifferent to exposure and reckless of consequences.

"If only I can touch His clothes I shall be cured," she kept muttering to herself.

The press was greater in the narrow streets of the town, but she worked her way through the throng until she was within reach of Jesus. Tense with suppressed excitement and expectation she kept whispering as if to reinforce her purpose:

"If only I can touch Him!"

Suddenly she darted forward, bent down, and grasped one of the tassels which hung by a purple cord from the corner of His robe. Instantly she let go. The shock of the experience combined with the power of suggestion and the strength of her faith affected her whole being and reacted favourably on the conditions of the functional disturbance.

Her action passed unnoticed amidst the movement and commotion. Jesus, quiet, self-possessed, sensitive to the least impression, felt the slight jerk. But independently of it His exquisite sympathy with sorrow and suffering, His affinity with human souls, even ignorant souls in all their pitiful strivings and needs, His Divine knowledge, brought Him into spiritual contact with her.

He stopped and looked round:

"Who was it that touched me?" He enquired.

"Teacher," said Simon, "you see how the people throng about you and press up against you. Any one might have touched you."

"Some one did touch me in a special way," He insisted, and searched the faces before Him. His glance at last fell upon a shrinking, abashed woman who,

trembling and pale, came forward and fell at His feet and confessed that it was she, and explained why she had done it, adding that she felt healed.

With a world of understanding pity in His eyes Jesus laid His hand gently on her shoulder:

"Daughter, be comforted, your faith has made you well; go into peace."

He had scarcely uttered the words when a man pushed his way through the crowd and addressed Jairus:

"Sir, your daughter is dead; there is no need to trouble the Teacher further."

Jesus heard the message and saw the anxiety on the face of the father deepen into dejection and grief.

"Do not despair," He said to him, "only believe. Have you not just had a lesson in faith?"

"Come, Teacher," said Jairus simply and led the way.

When they arrived at the house they found it already in possession of the professional mourners, women beating their breasts and uttering piercing cries, and flute-players piping a doleful dirge. Jesus stood for a moment contemplating the scene and then moved forward.

"Give way," He said sternly, "cease your din."

In the silence that ensued He continued:

"Why do you make such a lament? The child is not dead but asleep."

They heard Him with scorn. "Go in and see," they retorted.

He ordered them all to be turned out, and taking only the parents and Peter and James and John He passed into the room where the child was lying.

Gazing down upon her face so still and so beautiful

He took her cold hand, and in a tone which thrilled with Divine tenderness He said:

"Little maid, arise!"

She stirred, opened her eyes, and raised her head. He drew her up and she stood smiling as if awakening out of pleasant dreams and went to her mother.

Jesus interrupted the transports of joy and amazement and gratitude.

"My little friend is hungry," He said. "Let her have some food, and," He added, "it is a work of mercy; it will not help my true work; say nothing about it to any one."

"TO THE CLIFF WITH HIM!"

Jesus was gathering round Him a body of staunch believers, the nucleus of the new spiritual Kingdom, but outside of these was the great mass of humanity bound in the chains of custom and tradition, careless and slothful, quickly interested and as quickly indifferent, ready to applaud and as ready to reject. His sensitive spirit was beginning to feel the chill of reaction in their attitude.

The first check came at Nazareth which He reached in the course of a tour round the north-western district of Galilee. He arrived on this occasion as a recognised public teacher, the exponent of a new variant of the old religion, with a body of personal followers. The populace regarded Him with cold curiosity: they had heard of the stir He had caused down at the Lake, but He had been born amongst them and brought up, boy and man, in their company; there had been nothing exceptional about Him; He had always been kindly, industrious and upright; a little reserved perhaps but with no qualities that would justify His pretensions to

be a prophet. In any case His native town had the first claim on Him and He should have given it the benefit of whatever powers He did possess. Their spirit of jealousy was salted with a little contempt; they kept aloof from Him and asked of Him no favour. So indifferent was their attitude that with all His knowledge of human nature He marvelled at them. Unbelief incurred its penalty; all that He did was to cure a few sick folk in the town.

On Sabbath He and His disciples attended the service in the synagogue and took their places amongst the people facing the "ark" where the rolls of the Law were kept. The rulers, chief pharisees, and scribes sat in seats facing the congregation, the seats of the proud. The recital of passages and the prayers and responses were long, monotonous, and full of repetitions. When the time came for the customary reading and the address the rulers looked at one another; the presence of Jesus could not be ignored; they knew He ought to be asked to take part; the people also expected it. The request was made to Him and He rose and went to the desk. It was the second lesson. He was handed the roll of Isaiah, one of the canonical books every word of which was accepted literally as inspired by God. He opened it and read:

"The spirit of the Lord is upon me, for He has consecrated me to preach the gospel to the poor; to proclaim release for captives, and recovery of sight for the blind; to set free the oppressed; to proclaim the Lord's year of favour."

Never had they heard any one read it in such a manner. He spoke slowly, charging every word with a new meaning and seeming to impart to the whole a solemn and personal significance. In spite of themselves they were impressed. He shut up the roll and handed it

back to the assistant and sat down with an air of quiet authority. An unwonted hush pervaded the building.

It was one of the most dramatic moments in His career. As a child, as a youth, as a man, He had frequented the synagogue, worshipping with the people as one of themselves, and now He came not as a carpenter, a fellow-townsman, but as the ambassador of God announcing a revolution in the order of life; such a revolution as was dimly set forth in the passage He had read. He was there to change their conception of religion, to rescue them from the tyranny of their ecclesiastical burdens, and to summon them to surrender to the sweet and gracious rule of the Spirit.

"You have heard these words I have read from your scriptures," He said. "To-day you see them fulfilled, for I have come to do what they say."

The general body of worshippers regarded Him with astonishment: the rulers were not only astonished but angry at His presumption. He went on to speak with the calm assurance and earnestness of one who knows that what He says is true, telling them how He had been sent by God to show how the Kingdom of love and peace could come upon the earth.

"All things have been entrusted to me to effect by my Father. You think you know me? No one knows me save the Father. You think you know the Father? No one knows Him save His Son, and those to whom through the Son He is revealed. Yes, I have come to light a fire on the earth. Would that it were kindled and spreading! I have a baptism to undergo and I am under constraint until it is over."

They listened with interest but with increasing irritation and an expression that grew sceptical and cold. He felt the rising hostility and suddenly pausing changed the tenor of His address:

"When you in Nazareth see a cloud rise in the west above the hills you say 'There is a shower coming.' When you feel the south wind blowing you say 'It will be heat.' And so it turns out. You know how to read the signs of earth and sky and yet you cannot discern the spiritual meaning of what is happening before your eyes. What, therefore, can I say to you who have no vision and no desire to believe? I can at least speak to you on matters that you will understand."

Then with startling fearlessness He began pointedly to refer to conduct of which He knew the chief amongst them, especially the pharisees, were guilty. He had studied them in the old days to some effect:

"Do not show off your righteousness before men in order that you may be seen and gain favour: such outward piety is the essence of hypocrisy and it brings no real reward. When therefore you pray do not be like the hypocrites"—He paused significantly—"for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the street that they may be seen of men. In truth they have their reward for that is the only reward they receive. But you when you pray go into your room and shut the door and pray in secret to your Father and He who sees all that is secret will reward you. And in your prayer do not use vain repetitions as the pagans do, for they think they will be heard the more they speak; your Father knows what you need even before you ask Him.

"When you fast do not be like the hypocrites and wear a face of gloom, for they look like that to let people know they are fasting. Truly they get their reward and it is the only one. But when you fast do so in secret and God will reward you.

"When you practise charity do not sound a flourish of trumpets as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and

in the streets in order to obtain the notice and win the applause of men. Truly that is the only reward they do get. When you give alms do not let your left hand know what your right is doing; let the act be secret and your Father who knows what is done in secret will reward you in His own way."

So He went on exposing and condemning the false religionism of the men He knew so well until the body of rulers could scarce contain themselves. Usually after a sermon the congregation began an animated and friendly discussion of its points, but for a time there was a stupefied silence. Then came a torrent of conflicting comment:

"Who taught Him to talk like this?"

"Such teaching! Where did He get His wisdom?"

"But why should He address us like this: who is He to lecture us?"

"He is only the son of Joseph and Mary. We knew His brothers, and His married sisters are still with us."

"All common people."

"But surely He is a prophet. No common man could speak as He has spoken."

"Bah! He is a pretender. Let Him show us proofs."

"Ay, let Him work a miracle big enough for us to believe Him."

So the feeling surged to and fro.

He was speaking again:

"No doubt you are applying to me the proverb, 'Physician, heal yourself' and saying that what I have done at Capernaum I should do here. No"—emphatically—"a prophet is not welcomed and believed in his own country and by his own people. How can you expect the power of God to be manifested when you have no faith in Him who manifests it?"

And in a grave, cutting tone which made them wince He went on:

"Take to heart the lesson of history—your own history. There were many widows in the days of Elijah when famine was in the land, yet the prophet was not sent to any of these except one, a pagan, at Zarephath, on the Phœnician coast. There were many lepers in the time of Elisha, the disciple of Elijah, but none of these was cleansed save only Naaman, the pagan captain of Damascus. Now you condemn me because I have gone to Capernaum, which in your opinion is not so 'orthodox' as Nazareth. I say to you that God's love and mercy is for all mankind—for every one who believes in it."

It was a daring assertion, for it meant the dethroning of the Jewish nation from its proud position as God's chosen people, dishonouring it by placing it on a level with the idolatrous races of the earth.

The voices of the chief men rose into a tumult. Imprecations were hurled at Him. As their passions rose cries of "Eject Him, kill Him!" were shouted. The inflammable crowd-spirit of Galilee leapt into flame and the congregation became a wild mob. In a moment He was surrounded and seized and hustled out of the building. His disciples, struggling fiercely to protect Him, were swept aside.

"To the cliff with Him!" a voice shrieked. To be thrown from a rock was a recognised form of execution.

A responsive roar "To the cliff with Him!" came from the crowd.

They hurried Him along the street and up the steep slope to the bare spur which overlooked the lower part of the town.

Jesus remained unmoved, maintaining a self-posses-

sion and serene dignity which contrasted strangely with their savage excitement. When they reached the brow of the cliff, blowing and panting with the unusual exertion, they involuntarily paused to gain breath. As they did so they caught sight of His face. Its mystic calm, its utter fearlessness, its intense peace, struck them like a physical shock. They fell back and stood irresolute.

Motioning to His disciples, who were edging near, Jesus went through their midst and slowly descended to the town. He reached the white roadway and followed it up its wide curves over the hill and so left Nazareth forever. The town of His youth had flung Him out.

THE DANCING GIRL

He continued his work elsewhere; there was scarcely a village or town in Galilee He did not visit; scarcely a hill and valley He did not traverse with tireless steps. Long days were spent in solitary places teaching the Twelve, applying the lessons of their experiences with the people, and training and moulding them for independent service. He loved these country tours which brought Him close to the unspoiled beauty of nature; the mists of dawn and sunset, the birds, the cool pools and rivulets, the brilliant wild flowers, the olive trees glistening in the sunlight, the lizards among the rocks, all the quiet scenes and sounds of the open air rested and calmed and healed His mind often wearied by His intense activities.

The time came when it was necessary that the Twelve should go off by themselves to practise their growing faith and power, to gain confidence, and to realise the nature of their mission. But knowing the strain this

would impose upon them, and mindful of their comfort, He sent them away in couples for mutual support and limited the duration of their tour to a few weeks. They went as His deputies, or envoys, or messengers—in the Greek, "apostles"—with His authority to preach in His name and with power to heal the sick. "What I have told you privately proclaim in public; what I have whispered to you preach from the housetops."

As they were still untried He instructed them meantime to keep to the lapsed masses of their own people whom they understood and whose racial and social customs they were familiar with, and to avoid the Samaritan and pagan districts where the inhabitants were more difficult of approach and the problems more complex. They were also to travel lightly, in the same way as they used to go to the Temple festivals, taking nothing with them in the shape of money or provisions, or any of the articles associated with ordinary wandering priests: they were to trust in God's guidance and care, and accept without hesitation any hospitality which might be offered to them, since the labourer was worthy of his hire. "They who receive you receive me and they who receive me receive Him who sent me; they who receive you as prophets will receive the prophet's reward; if they receive you simply as good men they will receive a good man's reward. Those who give you even a cup of water because you are disciples will not lose their reward."

With a feeling of high hope not unmingled with natural nervousness they took leave of Him.

Jesus felt the loss of their companionship and spent much time by Himself. Frequently He sought the lonelier reaches of the shore or ascended the hills. It was only away from the heat and noise of the town

that He could find rest and strengthening for His soul; it was in quiet solitude that He could best find God and speak with Him.

One evening He sat on a lofty spur gazing on the lovely vision of Lake and land spread out beneath and beyond Him. The sun was dipping behind the high ridge of hills. The heat haze which had been hanging low all day was lifting. As it vanished it left the atmosphere crystal clear. The whole circle of landscape was suffused with warm colour from the wild flowers that grew in mass. Insensibly the hues passed into a tender mauve and then into purple. In the afterglow the young moon floated, a delicate festoon of gold. With the complete veiling of all the features by the dark beauty of the night there came a solemn stillness. Only the crickets called in a shrill undertone from the long grass, and faintly, far below, sounded the plaintive music of a flute.

A star shone out and cast a thread of silver across the water; lights appeared along the western shore, a continuous band. One cluster like a stellar constellation indicated Tiberias. From the palace of Herod above there blazed out a brilliant flood of illumination. This, evidently, was one of the pleasure nights when the royal halls were thronged with guests and all the resources of the pagan world contributed to their sensuous entertainment. And John was there in his deep dungeon.

A sadness as of death fell upon His spirit. . . .

A day or two later a number of grave-looking young men appeared, their faces shadowed by some dark emotion. Jesus recognised them as some of John's bodyguard.

"John?" He asked.

"Has been killed by Herod."

And they related the tragic story.

Herod had not been ill-disposed towards John. Apart from his personal liking for the blunt-spoken prophet he was honest enough to recognise that there was no evidence to connect him with any political offence, and he had no desire to irritate the popular temper merely to gratify his wife's whim. John's friends were looking forward to his release.

On the anniversary of his birthday Herod, aping the Roman fashion, gave a banquet which was attended by the nobility and the chief civil and military officers of Galilee. During the evening, when the company were heated with wine and brains were foolish and tongues wagged, the dancers performed. "Very fine," cried Herod boastfully, "but not so good as the dancing of Salome." His courtiers, while seemingly deferring to his judgment, skilfully insinuated doubts; a look, a raised eye-brow, a slight inflexion in their tone set Herod on fire. "I will prove it," he said, and sent orders for his step-daughter to appear. She came and danced by herself to the accompaniment of the music with such grace and abandon that the company went into transports of delight. Herod, the fool, flushed and triumphant, addressed the panting girl and swore with the usual oriental exaggeration to give her whatever she liked to ask, adding, as the familiar story of Esther occurred to his mind, "even to the half of my kingdom."

She hesitated for a few minutes and then saying she would consult her mother she ran lightly out of the hall to Herodias. "What shall I ask for?" she enquired. The quick mind of Herodias, always brooding over John's insult, saw an opportunity to gain her end. Her passion made her rough. She seized Salome and thrust her forward. "Go, go quick! Ask for the head

of John the Baptist and bring it here on one of the salvers."

Salome never stopped to think; she flew back to the hall:

"I want here now the head of John the Baptist on a salver."

Herod stared at her in amazement; what a bloodthirsty request for a girl of seventeen to make! Ah! —it was the mother! A sorry, cunning trick. The shock of the request sobered him. Bitterly regretting his rash promise he felt inclined to retract it. But glancing round he saw the faces watching him, some with amusement, some with curiosity, some with malice; they had no interest, these men, in the prisoner, but they knew the real reason for his arrest and were wondering how Herod would contrive to wriggle out of the difficulty into which he had floundered. He sensed their attitude and resented it, and his very weakness made him determine to be strong. Strong he was, but for evil. He kept his oath.

Curtly he called one of his guard, a man specially trained for such tasks:

"Go to the cell of John the Baptist, behead him, and bring his head on a dish."

There was no further pleasure for Herod in the revelries; he waited grimly for the return of the officer, and when he appeared with the bloody head on a flat dish he ordered him with a gesture of disgust to give it to Salome. She, shuddering, carried off her ghastly trophy and handed it to her mother. And the disciples came and taking the headless body gave it reverent burial in a rock tomb. . . .

Jesus spoke quietly to the men; of John and his work and the seeming tragedy of his death, and as they

listened their eyes were opened and they saw deep beneath the mystery of events, and their bitterness and sorrow fell from them, and they went away comforted. Jesus had not been so forgetful of their hero as they had imagined.

Jesus indeed mourned for His hapless kinsman more than they knew. He saw in it also a storm-signal. As John had announced His advent he was now, by the manner of his death, foreshadowing what was coming. Assuredly, if the brutal forces of evil moved against Him there would be no mercy and no reprieve. But undisturbed by these thoughts He continued His work, toiling alone but quietly, graciously, with the serenity of perfect peace until His disciples should return.

They were having a successful tour, visiting places where they were already known and others that had been as yet untouched; though they made mistakes they greatly impressed the people, who thought there must be something in a religion which turned out such men and imparted to them so remarkable a healing gift. The Jesus movement was more talked of than ever. Hitherto it had excited little attention in government circles; it seemed to the officials to be merely another of the religious revivals which frequently agitated the common people and spent themselves harmlessly if left unnoticed. But the fact that many teachers were now appearing and disseminating the tenets of the sect was a circumstance which demanded investigation; their propaganda might be anti-social in its nature and involve danger to the existing order. Herod was informed.

"Who is this Jesus?" he asked.

"Some say He must be Elias; others think He is a re-incarnation of the old prophets; others again suggest that He is John the Baptist."

Herod frowned impatiently. "John I have just beheaded; it cannot be he. Has the movement any political basis?"

"Not so far as can be ascertained."

Herod was relieved. He did not wish to take action. The arrest and execution of another popular religious leader might further exasperate the people and lead to an uprising. Nevertheless it would be wise to see this Jesus and talk with Him. With the fate of John the Baptist before Him He was not likely to trench on personal matters.

"Well," he said, "I will see Him some time," and meanwhile dismissed the subject.

The enquiries made by the officials warned the disciples that Herod was on the track of the Teacher and this was the chief news which they took back to Capernaum. They found Jesus in the centre of the usual throng. As the passover celebration was about due the citizens were in holiday mood and there were many pilgrims already passing through on their way to Jerusalem. They whispered what they had heard regarding Herod's intention to summon Him to his presence but He smiled; then noticing how wearied they were with the travelling and the strain of their experience He said compassionately:

"We shall retire to some quiet spot where you can rest awhile and tell me all that you have accomplished."

"BE OUR KING!"

In the misty light of sunrise they stole down to the shore and the gospel boat. Not without being seen. Passover pilgrims were camping on the green spaces, and a few who were early astir raised the cry that the

Prophet was in their midst, and ere the boat was trimmed and the sail set a crowd had collected on the beach. A different type of men these from the shore folk; chiefly stalwart cultivators and shepherds from the tablelands across Jordan, and highlanders from upper Galilee, independent and patriotic and opposed to the alien authorities who killed their prophets and taxed them for heathen pleasures; and all eager for action. If only this young prophet who was so fearless and gifted would abandon His pacifism and resort to force they would follow Him to the death. Would He? It was what they desired to discover.

Where was He going? They saw the boat turn and make for the north-east coast. Having leisure they moved along the shore in the same direction and then a common purpose seized them, and like sheep they ran together in a bunch urging each other on, talking, laughing, gesticulating, and gathering reinforcements on the way. When they reached the Jordan they saw the boat heading inwards towards the flat sandy land.

Crossing by the ford they found that Jesus had landed, traversed the plain, and disappeared into the uplands near Bethsaida Julius where He was probably secluded with His disciples. Knowing that He would return to the boat they waited. A number proceeded to the town and the villages to buy food, and the intelligence that the wonder-worker was in the neighbourhood brought large numbers streaming down to the shore.

When Jesus looked down from a height and saw the multitude of people waiting so patiently for Him He was touched with the pathos of their position. They were like hungry sheep without shepherds to lead them to pasture. Regardless of His own need for rest He made His way rapidly down to them. They had kept

to the wide flat expanse bordering on the Lake, a sandy plain with shallow inlets in which fishermen were standing casting their nets, and covered with coarse clover grass, poppies and daisies. The beach was of black basaltic sand speckled by small white shells.

Shadows began to settle along the Lake, the sound of crickets heralding the twilight filled the air, but still the gracious work went on. Six o'clock came, night fell, the moon rose, and it was past the usual meal hour. The disciples grew increasingly anxious.

"Teacher," said Philip, practical-minded, at last, "they are hungry; they need to eat."

He turned with a smile. "Well, Philip, where are we to obtain food for so large a company?"

"Why, Teacher, we could not buy enough; it would take £8 to procure sufficient even to give each a morsel."

"Send them away," said the others impatiently, "and they will go into the farms and villages and buy for themselves."

"There is no need; you will supply them."

"Teacher! we have nothing. How can we buy food for all?"

"Go and see what you have."

When they returned Andrew said:

"We have found a shepherd boy with a store of five barley cakes and a few fishes, but how can these feed a multitude?"

"Bring them to me."

They did so.

"Make the people sit down in groups of fifties and hundreds," was the quiet command.

In the bright moonlight they went in and out of the crowd giving directions: "It is the Teacher's desire," they said; and were quickly obeyed, all being curious

as to what was to happen. The subdued murmur of talk died into silence as Jesus stood up in their midst and looked around. Their resemblance to a large family sitting down to the evening meal was so obvious that adopting the simple ritual of the Jewish home He uttered a few words of thanks to God for the food they were about to eat, and then broke the coarse cakes into pieces. To their astonishment the disciples saw these multiplying in His hands. Each received a large supply. In the same manner He divided the fishes to form a relish.

"Give them to eat," He said, and they distributed the food to the people. These were at first unaware of what was occurring, but when they realised that the endless supplies were being produced by Jesus apparently from nothing they knew that they were witnessing an amazing marvel. It was one which impressed their imagination and excited their hopes even more than His cures. No ordinary man could accomplish such a miracle. They were convinced that He must be their messiah. What could such a wonder-worker not achieve at the head of a nation! Their enthusiasm rose to fever-heat. A number of the ablest and most resolute came together, resolved to accept Jesus as their leader, and planned to take Him with them to Jerusalem.

In strange contrast to the excitement Jesus was quietly giving His disciples a lesson in thrift.

"Gather up the fragments that remain," He said, "that nothing be wasted."

"We shall have to find more baskets," they replied, and went off to borrow these from the peasants: on their return they filled twelve with the broken pieces.

The ringleaders of the pilgrims came to the disciples and told them of their determination.

"We are going to carry Him by force to Jerusalem and proclaim Him King of the Jews!"

The disciples secretly favoured the idea. Despite their association with Jesus and their knowledge of His ideals they were eager to see some demonstration which would commit Him to a definite course of high action. Judas was loud in his commendation of the scheme and urged it vehemently.

The conspirators approached Jesus and earnestly begged Him to accompany them to Judea: they would obey Him, protect Him, support Him, do whatever He called upon them to do.

"Be our King! destroy your enemies: set up your Kingdom: reign over us!"

It might have been one of the most critical moments in His career. Here again in actuality was the old temptation. He had only to allow Himself to be borne off by that formidable multitude and use His power for material ends and He would become a dominant world-figure, the supreme master of an imperial Kingdom. But there was no temptation in the thought for Jesus: between their will and His will there was a great gulf fixed.

Sadly He turned from the clamorous throng to the disciples hovering near excited and expectant:

"Take the boat and go towards Bethsaida of Galilee. I am going to send the people away."

They hesitated, showed unwillingness, hung about, but He insisted with a stern firmness which they could not withstand. They went off.

Then He faced the heated men about Him and in a baffling blending of kindness and rebuke, earnestness and humour, He crushed their hopes and dissipated their dream. Against the calm finality of His attitude

they were helpless, and much against their will they submitted to dismissal.

He waited until the last figure had vanished and then slowly crossed the deserted plain, climbed the hillside flooded by the moonlight, passed into the shadowed hollows, and was alone with God. . . .

The disciples had no sooner set sail than a local night wind blowing down the mountains began and forced them out into the Lake. Wishing to keep inshore in case Jesus should hail them they lowered the sail and took to the oars, but, the breeze increasing, a heavy sea rose and they made little progress: all they could do was to keep the boat heading westwards and steady under the shocks of the waves. . . .

Jesus came down from His retreat, crossed the Jordan by the ford, and walked along the road towards Capernaum. Though the wind was high the sky was tranquil and clear and the Lake was silvered with the moonlight. Suddenly He caught sight of the gospel boat, a dark speck out among the troubled waters, tossing like a piece of driftwood, with the crew in evident distress and toiling hard to make headway. He stopped. They needed help. . . .

They were on the point of exhaustion when one noticed what appeared to be a dim figure in the distance: he stared, for it seemed to be nearer to them than the shore: startled, he called the attention of the others to it. As they looked they were seized with fear and panic. What was it moving over the white-crested billows—coming towards them, steadily—walking?

"A ghost!" they cried in terror. The boat, uncontrolled, drifted and tossed at the will of the waves.

Above the tumult of wind and water came a clear voice:

"It is I: be not afraid."

The revulsion of feeling was instant.

"It is our Teacher!" said Simon. So strong was his reaction from fear to delight and confidence that he cried impulsively:

"Lord, if it be you, may I come to you on the water?"

Back came the one word:

"Come!"

In absolute faith he clambered over the gunwale and landed on the water and went boldly forward. But away from the solid security of the boat, alone on the heaving surface, the cold spray flying in his face and the wind worrying about him, a realisation of his abnormal position overwhelmed him: his courage weakened, his faith failed, and he collapsed and immediately began to sink. Stumbling, splashing, floundering, he cried imploringly:

"Lord, save me!"

Jesus, who was by this time near him, took him by the hand and held him up.

"Oh, disciple of little faith! Why did you doubt?"

Simon was speechless, and when they reached the boat and climbed in he hung his head in shame and misery. The others were too staggered by this new exhibition of the power of Jesus to heed him: they were kneeling in an attitude of worship and awe, and saying: "Oh, Jesus, you are the messiah"; "Jesus, you are the son of God," and similar phrases.

The wind slackened, and leisurely they rowed past Capernaum and Bethsaida and as dawn was breaking moored the boat at the shore of Gennesaret and landed. The news of their arrival spread as swiftly as runners could carry it, for there were many sick people in the

villages and hamlets who were longing for a visit from the renowned physician.

Gennesaret was the largest and most beautiful of the deep free spaces bordering on the Lake. Protected by high hills it possessed a hot but equable climate, was well watered by streams and springs, and grew all manner of semi-tropical produce. Rushes, sedges and oleanders fringed the shore, and every waste spot beside the fields and orchards was aflame with tulips, irises, and other flowers.

Through the populous villages of this region He made His way, talking understandingly and sympathetically to the people about themselves and their troubles, comforting the stricken, speaking of the new way of life, and healing the unwell. His course was watched and at every point crowds intercepted Him: in every village the market-place was an open-air hospital. Many who had heard how the woman had been healed by touching Him begged to be allowed simply to finger the tassel of His robe. To Him it was happiness again to be amongst men and women of child-like faith, and not the less so because He was conscious of menacing forces in the background gathering for action.

Meanwhile the passover band who had wished to take possession of Him bivouacked near the scene of the miracle, and with their determination renewed by a night's rest and reflection sought for Him again in the early morning. Though they searched high and low there was no sign of Him. A number of Tiberias fishing boats that had been driven from their grounds by the squall were lying off the shore and preparing to return to port, and they questioned the men in these but they had seen no one about. There was nothing for it but to return to Capernaum. Bargaining with

the fishermen for a passage they were given a quick run to the city and landed at the pier. Of Jesus they could learn nothing until some incoming travellers from the west brought the news that Gennesaret was agitated over His presence there. On therefore they proceeded and found Him quietly pursuing His work.

They expressed their astonishment.

"Teacher, how did you come here?"

His thoughtful gaze fixed them for a moment.

"Friends," He said, "you are seeking me only for the material good you think you will obtain. But that is fleeting and it is not in the line of God's will. You should rather search for what does not perish, for what lasts for ever, and this I can give you for it is in the line of God's will."

"What must we do then that we may work in line with God?"

"This is the will of God that you believe in Him whom He has sent."

They moved impatiently. It was not enough. Certainly they believed in Him—was He not standing before them—had He not exceptional gifts? What more was required? Did He want them to believe He was really God—God manifest in human flesh?

"What proof can you give us that you are Divine? Show us a conclusive sign and we will believe. You gave us bread yesterday but our fathers were also given manna in the wilderness."

"It was not Moses who gave them that food," replied Jesus shortly. He was not to be drawn, but He would try to lift their thoughts to a higher conception of things:

"It is my Father who gives you the true bread of life: it comes down from Him to give new life and power to the world."

"Lord, give us then this bread."

"*I* am the bread of life: he that comes to me will never hunger and he that believes on me will never thirst."

His gaze travelled over the rows of eager faces.

"You see me and yet you do not believe. Perhaps you are thinking that I claim too much. But I have come not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me. And this is His will, that all who see me and believe my words should obtain that eternal life which frees them from the conditions of time and death."

Some new voices were raised in expostulation.

"How can He say He is bread from heaven? we know Him: He is Jesus born in Nazareth: His parents were our neighbours."

"Why do you murmur against me?" He said. "Those who know the truth know what I mean."

The pilgrims continued their journey to Jerusalem: they were disappointed, puzzled, resentful: Jesus had lost an opportunity for heading a national movement which might never return.

He himself returned to Capernaum for the Sabbath and attended the synagogue as usual and addressed the congregation. His subject bore on the event which was being so much discussed:

"I say to you again that he that believes on me believes on God and has that quality of life which never ends. Your fathers ate manna in the wilderness but they died. If a man eats the bread that comes down from heaven he lives. That is the difference. I am the living bread from heaven."

Then varying the metaphor He went on:

"The world is dying of hunger but my body will save it and give it unending life."

He spoke the words with solemn emphasis and very

slowly as if to give them time to take in their significance. But though as orientals they constantly used figurative language such phraseology was unfamiliar to them and they lacked the imagination to invest the words with their true meaning.

"How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" they asked in scornful derision.

Jesus pushed the homely illustration still further:

"They that eat my flesh will live by me, and they that drink my blood will dwell in me. Even as I live by my Father so they will live by me. Do you not understand?"

No! He had only to look on their faces to see how puzzled and irritated they were. Even some of His loyal followers exclaimed:

"This is a hard saying: who can understand it?"

He turned to them:

"Are you perplexed because I speak of having come down from Heaven? What if you see me ascend to Heaven? I am trying to teach you spiritual truths by means of material things. Think of the spirit, for it is the spirit that matters, the flesh is nothing. The words I speak to you, the thoughts they impart, they are spirit and life. But there are some of you who have been so long blinded by outward observances that you do not yet see. Nay, there are some who do not believe in me at all."

When the service was ended it was a sour congregation that remained discussing His words; for the first time they let Him go without the customary courtesies. They, too, had been disappointed with His attitude. That He was not going to the passover seemed also to indicate that He could not be their messiah, who, when he came, would assuredly ratify all their customs and belief. Even the disciples felt that

the atmosphere was cool. Within a few days there were large defections from the ranks of His followers; they let it be known that they could no longer agree with His doctrines; and they went back to their old ways of life.

Jesus heard the intelligence unmoved. But He said to His twelve comrades:

"Will you also go away and leave me?"

It was Simon who answered:

"Lord, to whom can we go? you alone have the message of eternal life. We do believe in you; we know that you are the Son of the living God."

Jesus flashed upon him an affectionate and appreciative smile; then His face clouded and His eyes were sombre as He looked upon them.

"And yet," He said in a toneless voice, "although I chose you all so carefully one of you is turning out a devil!"

And He left them gazing at each other in amazement.

He spoke of Judas. An alert and ambitious young loyalist he was impatient for more practical results of the work of reform; he had hoped to see a rapid subversion of the existing conditions and he had visions of a position of influence for himself. Also he was growing mercenary. On account of his business aptitude Jesus had given him charge of the common purse and allowed him to handle the money and distribute what was gifted to the poor on their travels. But there were grave doubts as to his probity. It seemed as if some poisonous element were working in him and gradually destroying his finer qualities.

SHADOWS

The news carried to Jerusalem by the pilgrims was eagerly canvassed by the officials. Jesus was, they learnt, as active as ever but a reaction had set in against Him. If that were so, if His popularity were fading, they might now be able to act. Since He and His disciples had not come up to the festival He was evidently beginning to slight their institutions. Once more spies were sent to Galilee to secure positive evidence of His anti-Jewish feeling and propaganda. They dogged His steps and seized on the slightest pretext to entangle and convict Him before the people.

One day they made a formal representation to Him when He was addressing a large and varied audience:

"We observe that your disciples take their provisions out of their wallets and sit down and eat without first washing their hands. Why do you allow them thus to transgress the traditional rule?"

They referred to a regulation which was not in the written Law but was part of the oral tradition and imposed upon laymen and priests alike. The idea underlying it was that contact with objects and persons in the markets and shops rendered their hands ceremonially defiled and that these should be cleansed up to the wrists. It was even ordained that the food brought in should be washed, while it had also become the custom to wash all cooking utensils, dishes and tables before using them in case they might be ritually unclean and communicate their uncleanness to the eater.

They had delivered themselves into His hands. Swiftly and with quiet scorn He retorted:

"Why do *you* transgress the law of God? Hypocrites! pretenders! Well did Isaiah describe men of your stamp when he wrote:

" 'This people honour me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. In vain do they worship me, for their doctrines are but human precepts.'

"For ignoring the law of the spirit you hold sacred your own theological dogmas; you would rather obey them than the commandments of God. You do not even obey the Mosaic decrees. Take, for instance, 'Honour your father and your mother,' and 'He that speaks evil of father and mother let him die.' But what have your scribes enacted? If a man merely says to his poor and aged parents that the money or articles which might benefit them are dedicated by him to a special purpose—even a selfish one—he is absolved from using them in their interests. So you avoid your duty as sons. That is but one of many ways in which you evade the requirements of the moral law."

Ere they could reply He called to the people—who had made way for their religious leaders—to come nearer, and in a ringing voice He cried:

"Listen and understand. Nothing that a man touches or what he eats can defile him; it is only what proceeds from his inner nature which defiles him."

In one brief sentence He shattered their ritual legislation and pronounced their laboriously compiled tradition so much intellectual lumber. But there was just that touch of vagueness about the statement that kept their literal imagination wondering what He meant, and while they were still ruminating He left them and proceeded to Simon's house. Presently He was joined by the disciples, who seemed excited.

"The pharisees and scribes are scandalised and enraged."

"Let them alone; they are blind guides. If the people prefer to be guided by the blind they will both fall into the ditch. The doctrines of these men are like

plants in a garden that have not been planted by the gardener and they will be rooted up."

They stood hesitating and then Simon spoke:

"Teacher, what did you mean by that dark saying about defilement?"

"Simon! Are you also without intelligence? Even yet! Do you not see that the food that goes into the mouth passes into the body for its nourishment and the waste is expelled; but the things which originate within, bad thoughts, impure imaginings, pride, arrogance, malice, jealousy, envy, uncharitableness, deceit, these issuing in evil words and deeds show that a man is inwardly and spiritually unclean. To eat with unwashed hands therefore does not defile a man. Nothing makes him unclean but sin. To believe otherwise is superstition. Beware of mere ritual cleanliness, of religious formalism, for it often masks a corrupt soul."

"Teacher, we understand, but . . ." and they hesitated again.

He looked at them patiently:

"Say on."

"These men are plotting against you; they are openly saying that they will kill you."

"I know," He replied, "and we will not meantime give them the opportunity. We are taking to the road for another summer tour."

They left quietly and unobserved and made for the spacious hills on the north-west, where on the long distances between resting-places He continued to teach and train them. They passed out of Herod's dominions into the Roman province of Syro-Phœnicia, the old Canaanite region occupied by the hereditary enemies of the Jews. There in one of the secluded villages He fell in with a resident Jew who had heard of Him and who hastened to offer Him hospitality. He accepted

and with him remained and rested. But a stranger of such striking appearance accompanied by followers who paid Him so unusual a deference could not but arouse interest and curiosity. There is nothing hidden in Eastern villages, and it soon became known that He was a prophet and teacher and was accordingly treated with the respect which pagans as well as Jews rendered to intellect and piety.

One day, a woman, a Greek, but a native of the district, overheard the disciples calling Him "the son of David," whom she knew to be the hero of the Jewish race, and learnt that He was also a physician who was able to cure all manner of diseases. Her interest gave place to a wild hope. At home lay her little daughter, much beloved, suffering from a nervous brain trouble. Jesus was a foreigner of the queer race of the Jews, but mother-love overcame racial prejudice and fear. Failing to enlist the assistance of the disciples she made for the house where He was staying. Pushing her way in she fell at His feet.

"Sir! Have pity! . . . Son of David . . . my little girl is very ill. She has a demon. I have heard of your power. I beseech you to cure her."

Jesus looked interestedly at her, reading her character and her motives, and at the same moment the disciples appeared and took in the situation.

"Send her away," they urged, "she has been troubling us even in the streets. She is exciting attention and we shall soon have no peace."

It was true. To cure the child would create a stir and their rest would be at an end; but to place personal considerations before the need of others was not the way of Jesus. He would test both the disciples and the woman. A half-humorous smile played on His face as He said to her:

"I was only sent to the Jews because they knew the truth and have lost it."

The woman drew nearer. Her need was too great for argument:

"Lord, do help me."

His eyes fell on a pet dog moving and sniffing about the room. Still with that half-grave, half-humorous smile, and watching her narrowly, He said:

"Should the children not first be fed? Is it meet to take their bread and throw it on the floor for the dogs to eat?"

Her alert mind caught His meaning and quickly she replied:

"No, Sir; but the crumbs! Have the dogs of the house no right to the crumbs that fall from the table?"

The apt repartee, indicating an intelligence above the common, pleased Jesus.

"Oh woman, you have both wit and faith. Be it so. Go your way, your daughter is healed."

She rose, her face aglow, and hurried off and found her daughter lying in bed and weak but in her right mind.

It was what the disciples had foreseen; the staring, gaping and importunity of the villagers broke His peace and He went wandering on further north through the district of Sidon and then east across country towards the southern slopes of Mount Hermon where they entered the territory of Philip in the neighbourhood of Cæsarea Philippi. Avoiding the town itself with its brilliant pagan life and activities He journeyed from village to village teaching the Twelve and fashioning them into instruments fit for His purpose.

Once on the way, after prayer, He suddenly asked them:

"Who do the people think that I am?"

"Master, some ignorant ones say that you are John the Baptist, others that you are Elijah or one of the other prophets come to life."

"And you—who do you think I am?"

They looked at each other hesitatingly; it was difficult on the moment to find words to define their thoughts of Him. He had forbidden them to believe that He was the popular messiah of the Jews; He was a spiritual messiah, a representative from God, come to declare the real principles of life, yet they had no words except those in current usage to express their ideas. Simon was the one who answered: he made no difficulty about language; he was accustomed to plain and direct speech and he employed the common phrases of the day. Boldly yet humbly he said:

"You are the real messiah, the Son of God."

Jesus turned with a smile that dazzled Simon and gave him the name He had whimsically bestowed upon him in the early days; he had justified it.

"Happy are you, Simon. You are moved by the Spirit. I once called you Petros, a rock, and now you will be known as Peter; it is upon such rock-like faith that my Kingdom will be built, and not all the indifference of men or the tides of persecution will prevail against it."

People had been leaving their work and gathering about Him and their presence made Him add:

"Do not publish your belief. It will only hamper our work. The time is coming all too soon when we shall be in conflict with the world. It is inevitable. I shall be opposed by the authorities at Jerusalem and finally rejected and killed. But do not be discouraged. You will see me again."

They only half understood. Peter, elated by the

praise he had received, laid his hand on Jesus, drew Him aside and spoke reprovingly:

"God forbid! This must not happen to you. You must prevent it."

Jesus turned sharply, and observing that the others had heard, said sternly to Peter:

"Away, tempter! Your mind still savours of the world. You are regarding things from the human standpoint."

Peter shrank back looking foolish and abashed. Jesus softened as He saw his confusion and gathering them all about Him He sat down at the roadside and told them again in general terms of what was coming to Him and the trials that awaited them.

Presently He beckoned to the people hanging about to approach and listen. To the disciples it seemed that His words had a direct bearing upon what He had been saying to them:

"Except you fast to the world you will not find the Kingdom of God. He who would be my disciple must deny himself and take up his cross—the cross of life—day by day and follow me."

His cross! The word was terribly significant in that age when crucifixion was the most shameful form of death: was there a hidden meaning in His words? The hearts of the disciples were touched with fear.

"For whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake and my cause will save it."

He glanced at the disciples, and singling out one face kept His eyes fixed upon it:

"What will it profit a man if he wins the whole world and forfeits his own soul. What can a man gain to justify him losing his soul?"

Was He referring to any one in particular? Peter,

sensitive after his rebuke, felt uncomfortable; but the face Jesus was regarding was not his; it was that of Judas.

"Whoever is ashamed of me and of my teaching in this world, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed in the world to come."

His gaze swept over the gathering:

"Do not be discouraged: some of you before me will see my Kingdom being established upon the earth before you taste of death."

As they resumed their journey one disappointed heart brooded silently over the gloomy vision which Jesus had called up. To Judas it was now clear that there was to be no glorious revolt, no golden reign, no glittering prizes, but only an obscure struggle ending in sordid tragedy.

"The whole world!" he repeated to himself, "I would risk losing my soul for much less!"

AT THE FOOT OF THE SNOWFIELDS

They travelled leisurely north for about a week through hamlets and villages towards the central mass of Mount Hermon which towered 9,000 feet high above them—not a sharp peak, but rounded like its lower spurs. Jesus often stood and gazed at its radiant snowfields at dawn, or noon-day, or when they showed dim and ghostly in the semi-light of the stars.

The surmise of the disciples that He was making for the uplands proved correct. One afternoon at a village on the foothills He asked Peter and James and John to accompany Him and bade the others remain and rest. The four climbed through the oak forests and the loftier ridges where the ravines were filled with snowdrifts until they reached remote solitude.

High above the world, only the white austere altitudes beyond them, the sky undimmed in its dark splendour, the air pure and tonic, silence absolute and eternal—it was a fit place for contemplation and prayer. Here, if anywhere, the spirit could pierce the veil of the material and become conscious of the actualities of the Unseen.

Jesus was in a quietly happy mood. He bade the three men rest themselves while He went a little apart. They followed His figure until they saw Him halt and become absorbed in prayer. Tired after their exertions they lay down in the shelter of the rocks and fell asleep.

A feeling of something unusual, a sense of eeriness, awoke one who leapt up with a startled cry and shook the others to their feet. Were they dreaming? Jesus was standing near, His face illuminated by a mystic light, His white robe glistening. They heard Him speaking as if to unseen presences. Peter's mind instantly thought of the past great leaders of the race whom every one expected to reappear on the earth—what more natural then that they should come now and talk with Jesus who was, as he believed, the messiah? Hardly knowing what he was saying he blurted out:

"Teacher, it is good to be here: we shall put up three booths, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah"—a useless suggestion for there were no materials on the hillside to construct such shelters.

At that moment a cloud drifted upon them blotting out Jesus: they were isolated, alone, with unknown influences encompassing them. A dread sense of the supernatural overcame them. In mortal terror they fell and clung to the ground. A voice seemed to say: "This is my Son, the beloved, listen to Him." Over

their spirits surged a nameless awe: they dared not look up: they waited breathlessly with tense expectation. . . .

They were touched by a light hand and shivered in alarm, but it was Jesus bending over them.

"Rise," He said gently, "have no fear."

Like frightened children they rose and looked around and saw only the dim shapes of the rocks and the Master standing grave and serene. He quietened them and bade them resume their sleep.

Next morning when the mountain was flushed with warm colour they made the descent—Jesus saying little about the experience except to impress the need for reticence regarding it meanwhile: afterwards when He had risen from the dead they could relate what they had seen in confirmation of their message.

"What does He mean by that?" they asked one another. "Has Elijah not to come first? The scribes say so."

They decided to put the question to Him.

The old Jewish theology! Would He never get their minds free from foolish conceptions?

"So it is believed," He replied patiently. "But the forerunner—'Elijah' as you call him—has come already and the Jews did not recognise him and he suffered. The Son of Man will suffer in the same way."

"He refers to John the Baptist," they whispered.

When they reached the village where the other disciples had been left they found the place in commotion, a crowd filling the main street, and in the centre the disciples arguing with the local scribes. The former were looking flurried and vexed, the latter were baiting them with scornful jeers.

"Here is the Prophet!" The people turned and looked surprised when they saw Jesus: from their atti-

tude it seemed as if they had not expected to see Him return.

"What are you discussing with them?" He asked.

A man detached himself from the throng and fell at His feet crying:

"Teacher, I brought my son who is my only child: he is deaf and dumb and an epileptic, a very bad case. You were not here. The scribes said you had gone and would not come back and I asked your followers to cure him and they could not."

Jesus looked at the nine men with sorrowful, accusing eyes:

"Oh, faithless ones, how long shall I require to be with you?"

To the father: "Bring the boy to me."

The lad, conscious of the strange tumult and dreading what was to happen to him, fell into another fit and lay writhing on the ground, frothing at his mouth, a pitiful object.

"How long has he been like this?"

"Since he was a child. And he goes in peril of his life for he is always falling into the fire or into the stream. If you can do anything have compassion and help us."

" 'If I can?' " Jesus echoed. "All things are possible to him that believes."

A sudden ray of hope came into the man's eyes.

"I believe," he cried with tears, "help my unbelief."

As the crowd was pressing in and struggling for places to see better what was coming Jesus acted quickly. A word of command and the boy lay quietly on the ground, so still that the people said "he is dead." But Jesus bent down, took him by the hand, raised him up, and passed him, well, to the delighted father.

"Amazing!" cried the onlookers. "He exhibits the power of God"—then triumphantly to the scribes who stood by crestfallen: "What now?"

Not less disconcerted were the disciples. They followed Jesus into their lodgings and asked humbly:

"Teacher, why could we not cure the boy?"

"Because you have not sufficient faith. You doubted in your hearts whether you possessed the power and therefore you had not. If you had the smallest particle of real faith you would, as the saying is, ask even Mount Hermon there to remove to another place and it would do so. That is, with faith all difficulties you meet may be removed and nothing need be impossible for you. But you must support your faith with prayer."

They returned south to the Lake country, Jesus continuing on the way to impress upon them the necessity for remembering all He was teaching them since He would not be long with them. Although He always followed up His warning with the assurance that they would see Him again it made them anxious and perplexed. They could not visualise what His words implied; they seemed contradictory, and they doubted whether they had the real meaning. They would have liked to question Him, but recalling the rebuke to Peter on a similar occasion they forebore. They were becoming less sure of themselves and more conscious of the power and majesty and mystery of His nature. Often, falling back, they allowed Him to go on ahead while they discussed matters amongst themselves, speculating on the possibilities of the future and what it held for each of them. Their thoughts still ran on appointments and positions of high and low degree and who would fill them and to whom would be awarded

the chief office of all. It was an agreeable human way of lightening the tedium of their hot and dusty journeys though it sometimes gave rise to heart-burning and contention.

When they reached Capernaum again and were resting in the courtyard of Peter's house Jesus said to them smilingly:

"You were disputing on the road—what was it about?"

They looked foolish and were silent; there was no doubt that He knew; this Teacher of theirs was an uncanny person to live with!

"You have yet no grasp of the ethics of spiritual conduct. If any man wants to be first he must be last of all and servant of all."

It was one of the truths which blinded them with its simplicity.

"Who then," they expostulated, "can be greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?"

He called one of Peter's children who was playing in the court and he came running. Jesus lifted him up and held him in His arms.

"The man who makes himself as humble as this little child will be greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven."

It was one of the most astonishing and revolutionary utterances they had heard from Him. Child-life had never been held in special regard: the child-spirit was well enough in its place but it was not for grown men. Such an idea was the apotheosis of foolishness. Success in life was not won by the qualities of simplicity, modesty, selflessness, but only by self-seeking, astuteness, and outwitting others.

He saw their surprise and went on:

"This child represents the spirit of truth as I also do: whoever therefore receives a little child like this in

my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives God."

John caught at the phrase "in my name" and said inconsequently:

"Teacher, on the way here we saw a man curing diseases in your name and we forbade him because he is not one of us."

"You should not have forbidden him. Do not be narrow. Truth has many aspects and many exponents. No man who is doing work out of regard for me will speak lightly of me. Whoever is not against us is for us. Even those who give you merely a cup of water to drink for my sake will not miss a reward."

He put the child down.

"I spoke of the child-heart. Take heed. Do not despise it: whoever disparages or offends any one who loves me, however humble or lowly, would be better to have a millstone tied round his neck and be thrown into the depths of the Lake. They who possess the child-spirit are nearest to my Father in heaven. Remember, the Son of Man has come to save all that are lost, the simple and unlearned and foolish, as well as the wise and learned and proud. What do you think—if a man has a hundred sheep and one of them goes astray will he not leave the ninety and nine and go into the hills and seek the wanderer? And if he find it will he not rejoice more over that single one than over the ninety and nine? Even so it is not the will of your Father that one of His children should perish."

Not long afterwards Jesus was sitting on the verandah overlooking the court when He saw Peter accosted by tax-inspectors and heard them ask:

"Does your master not pay the Temple tax?"

This tax was the silver half-stater or half-shekel (about 1*s.* 4*d.*) levied on all Jews of the age of twenty

and upwards to meet the expenses of the daily services at Jerusalem.

"He does," responded Peter promptly, and the men, satisfied, moved off.

"Peter!"

"Yes, Teacher." He ascended the stair and saw Jesus looking at him in a way that put him on his guard. The Master loved to banter and test him and quicken his powers.

"What do you think, Peter? From whom do the kings of the world exact taxes, from the members of their own family or from their subjects generally?"

"From their subjects."

"Then the family are exempt!"

Peter saw the point and laughed.

"However, we must not give occasion for offence in such small matters."

Again came the quizzical look.

"Go down to the Lake and cast a line and in the mouth of the first fish on the hook you will find a stater; it will do for us both."

Peter was learning to give unquestioning obedience to Jesus but learning also to pause and ponder on the higher meaning which so often lay behind His words. Was He serious? He knew how He scorned to use His powers for personal ends, for had He not told them of His temptations in the wilderness? While hesitating he caught the laughing challenge in the unfathomable eyes and knew that He was waiting to see what he would do.

Suddenly it came to him. It was a moral lesson wrapped up in a few homely, parabolic words. It was right to give tribute where tribute was due and it should be earned by honest work. Labour won its

golden reward. He was meant to go down to the Lake and fish and so obtain the amount of the tax.

And without further ado he went.

One day Jesus said to His disciples, "Let us go to the other side beyond the Jordan," and they made for the shore and entered the gospel boat and proceeded along the coast to the east. On the way they discovered that they had forgotten to bring provisions with them. There was only one loaf in the locker.

Jesus heard them discussing the matter and remarked:

"Beware all of you of the leaven of the pharisees."

The disciples heard but did not understand. They whispered to each other, "Is it because we have not brought any bread?" They were still like men who saw the dawn and sunset and yet did not see the glory of them, and heard the sounds of nature and did not hear the music of them.

"Oh men of little faith, why are you anxious about bread?" He said. "You have eyes and yet you do not see and ears and do not hear. Why is your heart still so hard? Why do you not trust? Do you not remember how the five thousand people were fed and how many baskets were left over? I did not refer to bread but to the false attitude of the pharisees—to their formalism and hypocrisy."

They landed and went up to the town of Bethsaida Julius. On the way they passed a hamlet where a man had become blind. Some neighbours seeing Jesus passing and having faith in His sovereign touch hurried the man on after Him and in the streets implored Him to heal their friend. They were rewarded, for He took the man by the hand and led him out of the crowded thoroughfares into a quiet spot outside the town, and

after fixing his attention and stimulating his expectations by laying His hands upon his eyes, He asked:

"Do you see anything?"

The man raised his head, peered around and exclaimed:

"I see men; they seem like trees walking."

Again Jesus gently touched his eyes and requested him to look. Gazing steadfastly in front of him he began to discern things distinctly, and in a few moments his sight was completely restored.

It was one of the "signs" such as the pharisees wanted, but it had no relation to His teaching and He did not wish it to be bruited about and regarded as a proof of His divine mission. He cautioned the man against spreading an account of the incident. "Do not even enter the town; return straight to your home."

He imposed the same reticence in other cases. A man was brought to Him who was deaf and who stammered. Taking him aside from the crowd and helping his faith by placing His fingers on his ears and on his tongue He said "open," and the man was cured of both his deafness and stammer. "Do not speak of this," He said to those who stood around. But they were too astonished to keep silence and the matter was soon common talk.

A TERRIBLE FAREWELL

The work of Jesus in Galilee was done; although the reaction which always followed the revival of the religious spirit had set in, He had sufficient groups of steadfast followers everywhere to maintain His cause and leaven the community, and it was time to proceed south to the regions which had not yet been touched. It was chiefly Peræa He had in His mind, the territory

which lay immediately to the east of Jordan. A high tableland it was, a rough and somewhat cold country but well watered and fertile. Plantations and vineries were numerous and there was much good pasturage. It was not so Jewish as Judea or Galilee, there being a large population of Greeks and other aliens. This strong hellenistic civilisation intermingled with the Jewish would give Him a wider range of influence.

He resolved first to go to Jerusalem and attend, but not in a public way, the Feast of Tabernacles in October which celebrated the ingathering of the harvest, and at which prayer was offered for abundant rain for the ensuing season. The people lived largely in booths in commemoration of the time when they tented in the desert. It was one of the pilgrimage feasts at which every member of the race was supposed to be present, and hundreds of thousands usually camped in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem.

His brothers urged Him to go up with them. They held strongly the current ideas about the messianic deliverer but they could not yet accord Jesus that unique distinction. Why if He were from God did He go about so quietly and unassertively teaching simple moral truths to simple people? But they conceded that He was gifted with extraordinary medical and psychical powers and with these He might achieve much.

"Come with us," they said, "and make a bold stand at Jerusalem. Show your power before the multitudes. Many of them already support you. Why if you want to revolutionise things do you seek obscurity? No man can be in the public eye and yet work in secret. If you really possess supernatural qualities then seize this favourable opportunity of displaying them and demonstrate your authority to the whole world."

He knew what was in their mind—a triumphal procession, a spectacular exhibition, a flamboyant pronouncement, all the noise and fever of a political upheaval. It would mean a grim conflict with the Roman forces, a country drenched with blood, and ruin complete and irremediable. Such was not the will of His father or the way to the Kingdom.

He dismissed the idea with a gesture.

"My time is not yet. *You* have nothing to consider or to influence you; the world does not hate *you*"—this with a touch of irony—"but it hates me because I tell it that its ideas and methods of life are evil. Go you on. I will follow in my own way when I am ready."

They acquiesced with a shrug of their shoulders.

To prepare the way for His new campaign He selected from amongst the most devoted and capable of His followers a company of seventy, constituted them evangelists, and sent them on ahead; they were, He said, to travel lightly and swiftly, to cover the whole ground east and west between Galilee and Jerusalem, announcing the Kingdom of God and healing the sick and generally creating a sense of anticipation and interest.

"Your task is a difficult one; you are going to the most worldly and hardened districts of Palestine and among pagans; you are indeed going out as lambs into the midst of wolves. But he that despises you will despise me and he that despises me will despise Him that sent me."

With a word of cheer He dispatched them two by two and they left buoyed up by His own enthusiasm and fearless indomitable spirit.

When the last had gone He set off Himself with the Twelve, along the western road, crossed Gennesaret,

and, avoiding Tiberias, climbed the rugged slopes that overlooked the Lake. When He reached the crest He halted and stood gazing long and thoughtfully upon the scene of His strenuous ministry. It was afternoon and all the land and water was bathed in a golden haze. He saw almost the whole extent of the Lake basin, the Lake itself shining and still save where a wandering wind flicked it with ripples, and covered with pleasure boats; the whole northern range of heights with Safad perched on their crest; the gleaming mass of Hermon; the long rampart of green ridge and dark ravine opposite with the shore bright with flowers; to the south the low fold where the Jordan made its escape; and everywhere brown fields and white roads; and, on lake margin and hill height, towns and villages and smoke upcurling from a thousand homes. About Him in the drowsy air birds were flitting and calling, and up from the habitations below came faintly the cries of children at play—beautiful and serene it all looked beyond words.

He thought of the cities where so many of the people loved Him. And yet many more were going back to their traditional ways of thinking and living. Habit, association, the allurement of the world and the flesh, were proving too strong for these; their hearts after being cleansed had felt too clean, life was too austere, the old passions had returned, and their last state would be worse than the first.

It was as Jesus had feared. His heart grew sad and His face stern. Slowly and solemnly He spoke:

"Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! Had the miracles performed in you been done in the pagan cities of Tyre and Sidon they would long ago have repented in sackcloth and ashes. It will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of retribution

than for you. And you, Capernaum, which has been exalted to heaven will go down to destruction and death; for if the works which I have done in you had been done in Sodom it would have remained in existence until to-day; it will be more tolerable for Sodom in the slow movement of spiritual judgment than for you."

A terrible farewell! The disciples listened deeply moved; the words sounded to them like a curse pronouncing the doom of the cities. But they had not the spiritual insight and foresight of Jesus, nor His knowledge of how surely and inexorably the laws of God work out in human life. He was describing what to Him was clear, the inevitable decay and disappearance of communities which sought and obtained only material good and lost their soul.

For a little He stood in silence, and then, turning, He set His face towards the south.

IV: THE STORY OF THE SOUTHERN CAMPAIGN

Having exhausted the possibilities of northern Palestine Jesus moved to the southern districts where the features of His work were repeated on an even larger scale. The opposition of the ecclesiastical parties was not lessened by visits which He paid to Jerusalem, and by His fearless addresses in the Temple, and in the end it became so violent that He retired to a refuge in the hills. He was outlawed and a warrant was issued for His arrest.

THE SISTERS

Jesus sent James and John on ahead to bespeak quarters for the night in the nearest Samaritan village. The people were in a churlish mood and declined to afford lodgment to men who were their hereditary rivals. It was a breach of the common law of hospitality universally observed, and in a state of furious anger at the slight the disciples came back demanding that the vengeance of heaven should be called down upon the villagers. Jesus ignored their temper and quietly remarking, "Let us go to another village," turned south-east towards the Jordan.

As they journeyed between the borders of Samaria and Galilee with the river on the left He gathered audiences at every opportunity by the wayside, in the hamlets, in the khans, and among the tents of the shepherds, and addressed them. To these people His personality and message were fresh and appealing, and

many were deeply moved and believed on Him. Others attached themselves to Him from mixed motives. One enthusiastic convert, a scribe, with visions perhaps of an earthly kingdom and the bestowal of honours, cried:

"Teacher, I will follow you wherever you are going!"

A smile flitted over the face of Jesus. Rejected in His own city, unpopular in Galilee, rejected in Samaria, homeless and a wanderer, what had He to offer to any one?

"Count the cost," He replied. "The foxes have their dens, the wild birds have their nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."

The man flinched and backed into the crowd.

So with another who declared: "I will follow you, but first let me return to my home and bid my people good-bye."

Jesus read his character; he was well-intentioned but excitable and unstable.

"No man," He said, "who has put his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the Kingdom of God."

It was His way of testing men.

On another occasion He said to one who seemed much interested:

"Follow me," and waited.

"Yes, Teacher, but let me first go and bury my father."

Jesus knew that he had come from an evil home and that as there were other sons who could perform the duty it was not necessary for him to go.

"Let the dead bury their dead, but you come and help to spread the good news of the Kingdom."

As He travelled through the region being worked by the evangelists they came in to give their reports.

All were filled with the joy and elation of successful achievement: the people had responded and they had been able to heal the sick in His name. "Even the insane yielded to us," they said. He was pleased at their pleasure, and with the triumph of good, but He warned them to be humble and rejoice only that they were worthy of doing such work. And to His Father He spoke simply and naturally:

"I thank Thee, Father, that these things which have not revealed themselves to the wise and learned have through Thy power been made clear to simple-minded men and that Thou hast used them for Thy purpose."

Turning to the Twelve He remarked:

"You are fortunate, you men, for many of the greatest on the earth have wished to see the things that you are seeing and have not seen them and to hear the things that you are hearing and have not heard them."

They passed through Jericho and entered on the long and toilsome ascent through the wild wilderness tracts. At one point where there was a gathering of Pilgrims a scribe sought out Jesus and with affected humility asked Him:

"Teacher, what must I do to gain eternal life?"

Jesus, regarding him thoughtfully, read his desire to humble Him, and answered with another question:

"You are a student and interpreter of the Law: what does it say?"

What a puerile evasion of the question, the scribe thought: every Jew knew what it said. He recited the words:

"You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your strength, and with all your mind."

"'And your neighbour as yourself,'" Jesus reminded him.

"*'And your neighbour as yourself,'*" he admitted, for that also was a legal precept though not part of the regular formula.

"You are right: do these things and you will live."

No creed, no ritual, no scheme of salvation: only love for God and love for one's neighbour—it was the gospel He had come to teach.

"Ah!" cried the scribe, sure now of scoring. "But who is my neighbour?"

A shrewd thrust, in the view of those who listened, and one bound to open up difficult questions.

"I will tell you," said Jesus calmly. "A certain man who came down this road was attacked by robbers. They beat him and stripped him and left him half-dead. A priest came along. He observed the stricken form but passed by on the other side. So did another Temple official—a Levite—he glanced at the figure and went on. Then a Samaritan came riding up and was moved with compassion when he saw the state of the man. He dismounted, poured oil and wine on his wounds and bound them up, placed him on his beast, and conveyed him to the nearest khan and nursed him. Next morning he gave the khan-keeper a couple of shillings and said: 'Attend to the man and any extra expense you incur I will refund on my way back.' Now, in your opinion, which of these three men proved a neighbour to the victim of the robbers?"

The scribe drew in his breath sharply: in a simple but ingenious way he had been placed in a dilemma. For Jesus had forced him to admit that one of a hated and despised people had done a good action. He could not mention him—even to utter the word "Samaritan" was to defile his lips—and therefore, reluctantly, he replied:

"I suppose it was the one who showed pity on him."

"Go then and act in the same way."

Thus indirectly and yet unmistakably He taught that one's neighbour was the member of whatever race or creed or class who was in need and that to love and serve him was one's duty and the way to eternal life.

They reached Bethany and the home of Lazarus and his sisters, and found the latter in the midst of their preparations for the festival guests, for it was the custom not only to erect booths but to have ready special dishes and sweetmeats and to put aside portions for the poor. Jesus was warmly welcomed. Here was a guest of honour indeed! They had been hearing much of His remarkable doings in Galilee and were eager to see and talk with Him again. Martha, noticing that He was hot and tired and dusty with the journey, was solicitous for His comfort and went to prepare refreshment. Mary was oblivious to everything save that she was in the most wonderful Presence in the world. When He sat down and talked with the other guests she crept silently and unobtrusively to His feet and listened, fascinated and adoring, her eyes glowing with mystical light. From time to time Martha glanced impatiently towards her and at last came forward:

"Teacher, my sister has left me to prepare and serve alone. Let her come and help me."

She felt, rather than saw, the cool dark eyes upon her heated face.

"Martha," He said, and His voice seemed to calm her heart in the strangest way. "Why are you worrying? Why prepare so much for us? Only one thing is needful. Do not be vexed with Mary." He looked down upon the fair face that had winced under Martha's rebuke and smiled, a very tender smile. "She

has chosen the best portion! the dish that will last for ever!"

But He gave Mary a look and, flushed and happy, she rose and helped her sister.

In the quiet seclusion of the home Jesus remained until the festival was half over. He had been expected and the officials had ordered spies to keep a watch on His movements, but they found no trace of Him in the city.

"Where is He?" they demanded of the Galileans. "He must be here: a Jew of His position would not miss the feast."

None could, or would, answer. Amongst themselves they were commenting on His absence and hotly debating His character and aims. There were two parties, one for, and the other against, Him. "He is a good man, a wise teacher, and no disturber of the peace." So the one. "No, He is misleading you, He wants to upset the government and will get us into trouble." So the other. But as the real policy of the religious authorities was as yet undeclared they did not dare to discuss Him too openly.

A WOMAN WHO SINNED

It was on the Sabbath that with a few disciples He walked over the Mount of Olives and entered the city. He went straight into the Temple, and, selecting a quiet corner, sat down as any rabbi had a right to do and began to teach. His distinction of bearing, His authoritative manner of speaking, the nature of what He was saying, attracted a crowd which grew so large that it drew the attention of the officials. "It is He: it is Jesus of Nazareth!" they exclaimed, and the word passed from mouth to mouth.

Those most surprised were the citizens who knew of the search that was being made for Him.

"Is not this the man you want?" they said to the officials. "And here He is talking in public and nothing is done! Have you discovered after all that He is the messiah?"

"What folly!" they replied sharply. "We know where this man comes from. When the messiah does appear no one will know whence he comes."

Jesus overheard the retort and raising His voice said:

"You say you know me and whence I come. Do you? I am not self-appointed. I come from God. Not the God of your worship. You do not know God. I know Him. It was He who sent me."

John marvelled at the courage of his Master: here in the very heart of the Jewish religious system He was attacking its official supporters with words that struck them like blows. They were angered beyond measure and began a violent demonstration against Him, shouting, threatening, and hounding on the crowd to seize and punish Him for His insolence. There was little response: one voice called offensively, "Will the messiah when he comes do greater marvels than this man?" Quickly conscious that the feeling was against them they ceased their efforts and slunk away and reported the matter to the high priests.

A meeting of the Sanhedrin was hastily convened and a number of legal officers were ordered to go and arrest Him. They hung about, seeking a favourable opportunity to execute the warrant, and the disciples who were aware of their purpose became anxious. Jesus noticed their fears and smiled reassuringly:

"I will be with you some time yet before I go to Him who sent me."

Singling out the hard-faced emissaries of the Council He addressed them:

"And you—you will seek me and will not find me, for where I go you cannot come."

Looking like men detected they edged away. "What," they enquired of one another, "does He mean? Where can He go that we shall not be able to reach Him? Does He intend to leave the country and go to Egypt or Babylonia and teach in the Jewish settlements there?" As they returned to official headquarters the mysterious words haunted them: "You will seek me but you will not find me." What a strange man He was!

They were sent back to do their duty but no chance came until the final morning of the festival. Jesus was addressing an audience in one of the courts when the priests passed in procession on their way from the pool of Siloam carrying in golden vessels the water used at the sacrifice, and singing, *"With joy shall we draw water out of the wells of salvation,"* an act of pure ritual barren of spiritual quality.

His clear strong voice rang out:

"If any one thirst let him come to me and drink: he that believes on me will receive the spirit of power and from his soul will flow streams of living water."

So affected were His hearers that they cried out:

"This certainly is the prophet that was to be raised up for us."

While others excitedly shouted:

"He *is* the messiah!"

"Keep cool!" advised the cautious. "Surely the messiah will never come out of Galilee?"

"The scriptures say He will be a descendant of David and come from Bethlehem," remarked one unconscious of how near he was to the truth.

Again there was a sharp division of opinion, the majority being on the side of Jesus. The Sanhedrin detectives returned empty-handed to their superiors.

"Where is He?" they asked angrily. "Why did you not bring Him here?"

"All we can say is that no man ever spake like this man. He has put the people under a spell. We could not arrest Him."

"Ho! Has He captured you also? Who are you to judge? Do any of us believe on Him? You obey the mob rather than your rulers? The mob which is ignorant of the law and is accurst!"

"Stay," interposed a mild-mannered member of the Council whose mind held an ineffaceable memory of a secret talk which he had once had by night with the young man they were seeking to suppress. "The people, it is true, may not know the Law, but we know it. Let us therefore show that we do. The Law does not judge a man before it gives him a fair trial. We must ascertain what He is accused of and what He has to say."

This was the bare truth but it only angered them; they were not out to know the truth but to destroy an individual who was undermining their authority and traditions; it was a matter of self-preservation. They evaded the points which Nicodemus had raised and took refuge in a sneer:

"Are you also from Galilee like the rest of His followers? Read history and you will find that Galilee does not breed prophets."

A chance incident gave them another opportunity of embarrassing Jesus and possibly of making Him blunder into an incriminating statement and they made instant use of it.

While He was teaching the people suddenly there came a stir, and a group of scribes and pharisees entered the court and made for the front of the gathering. In their midst was a woman whom they were dragging forcibly along, her hair dishevelled, her face flushed and wet with tears, her eyes hot and terror-stricken. They thrust her before Jesus and she shrank trembling to the ground. He looked up quietly at the men and saw mingled with an expression of sanctimonious ferocity a half-concealed eager anticipation. He waited.

"Teacher," they exclaimed with simulated deference, "this woman has misconducted herself; she was caught in the very act. Now, in our Law we are commanded to stone women guilty of such an offence. What then do you say?"

Jesus gave them another searching look, detecting the note of triumph already in their attitude. For they had at last succeeded in propounding a question which it was impossible for Him to answer without incurring grave risk. If He upheld the Mosaic penalty His teaching would conflict with the Roman law which denied to the Jews the right of inflicting a death sentence; on the other hand if He pronounced in favour of any lesser punishment He would antagonise the people and incline them to the belief that He could not be their messiah. What reply would He make?

He bent forward and stooping down slowly wrote with His fingers on the ground. Ah! they thought, they had caught Him! He was cornered.

"Come, Teacher, tell us," they urged, and at last He raised Himself and said in a grave, clear voice that seemed weighted with significance:

"Let him who is without sin among you cast the first stone at her."

Again He stooped forward and with His finger wrote as it were on the ground.

They looked at each other in startled silence. What did He mean? What did He know? They were inclined to be angry and bluster, but a still, small, inner voice recalled them to a sense of justice and of shame. Were they, after all, innocent of evil themselves? Whether He spoke in a general or in a particular way He was right.

The oldest man amongst them turned on his heel and slunk away; his example was followed by the others one by one until all had gone. In the silence Jesus went on tracing mysterious lines: the people held their breath. He looked up and there was a strange smile on His face:

"Woman," He said to the dazed, crouching figure, "where are they all? Did no one condemn you?"

"No man, Sir," she replied with an effort.

"Neither do I," He said very gently. "Go your way and from henceforth sin no more."

And with a sob of relief and eyes flashing gratitude she moved away and vanished behind the throng.

"YOU ARE MAD!"

That night Jesus appeared in the Court of the Women, which was brilliantly illuminated, and stood in the colonnade close to the treasury receptacles. Those who gathered in front of Him were chiefly citizens who were pharisees; most of the Galileans had gone home. He came forward, a white-robed figure, and pointed to the lamps above them:

"*I* am the light of the world; he who follows me will never walk in darkness but always in the light of life."

"So you say," said the pharisees—for they had the right to argue publicly in this court—"but it is easy to speak; we have only your own evidence for that."

"Even if I bear witness of myself my testimony is valid because I know whence I came and whither I go and you do not. You judge by outward appearances, which I do not do, for my judgment is true. Besides there is my Father as witness. Is it not written in your Law that the evidence of two witnesses is valid? My evidence and that of my Father who sent me is surely sufficient."

The pharisees retorted contemptuously. "Where is your Father?"

"If you knew me you would know my Father but you know neither of us."

"Well, tell us whither you go?"

"I go to a place to which you cannot come—for you will die in your sins."

"What do you mean? Are you going to do away with yourself?"

"Ah! you are of the world! I am not. You will die in your sins unless you believe in me."

"But who are you?" they persisted.

"Have I not said who I am," He replied patiently. "You will learn more of me by-and-by. But why should I speak to you at all? My judgment of you is the judgment of my Father who has taught me. He is always with me and I simply do the things that He wishes me to do."

He spoke with intense earnestness and profound feeling, and not a few amongst His hearers experienced the sudden emotion and change of spiritual outlook which often came from contact with Him. He knew it and spoke to these:

"If you who believe abide by what I say and seek

to practise what I tell you, you will be my disciples and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free."

The pharisees thought He was addressing them:

"We are the children of Abraham," they said with pride, "and though we may be politically dependent we are no slaves. What do you mean?"

"I speak of the bondage of the spirit. Every one who disobeys the laws of God sins, and whoever sins is a slave. You know that a slave is not a real or permanent member of a household. It is only a son who is. If therefore you are made free in the highest sense of which I speak you are free indeed! But you do not comprehend. I speak what I have heard from my Father and you what you have heard from your father; we are moving in different regions of thought."

"Abraham was our father."

"If you were the children of Abraham you would inherit his spirit. Instead you seek to kill me; one who is telling you the truth He learnt from God. Would Abraham do that? You are certainly acting like your father but he is not Abraham!"

It was a daring utterance and John, watching their faces, began to tremble, but they did not take in His meaning.

"Our Father is God," they shouted.

Then slowly, calmly, sternly, He drove home the truth:

"If He were your Father you would accept me and love me for I come from Him. I did not come of my own accord. He sent me. Why do you not understand what I say? Because you do not want to believe what it involves. Your father! He is the father of all evil, that murderous, lying principle of evil which is responsible for the suffering and sorrow of the

world. It is his will you wish to do. If I had come from him telling you lies you would have believed me, but because I come from God and tell you the truth you will not believe. Which of you can convict me of sin? Why then do you not believe me? It is because you do not really know God."

Their anger had risen to white heat but they had begun to wonder whether He was not out of His mind.

"You are talking rank heresy, but you are mad!"

"I am not mad. In saying that you dishonour me but I care not; I am not seeking my own glory. There is One who will judge you. But if any of you hear me and keep my words they will not be judged and will not taste of death."

There was a clamour of confused cries.

"Now we know you are mad! Abraham is dead and so are all the prophets and yet you say if a man keeps your words he will never die. Are you greater than Abraham or the prophets? Who do you claim to be?"

"I am not exalting myself; it is my Father who is exalting me. You say He is your God but I say again that you do not really know Him. I know Him; if I said I did not I should be a liar and worse than you. But I do know Him and keep faith with Him. You say Abraham is dead. I tell you Abraham has seen my day and is glad."

A burst of derision:

"You are not yet fifty years old. How can Abraham have seen you?"

He raised His hand:

"Before Abraham came into being I am."

For a moment the mysterious words stunned them; in their minds they hurriedly groped after their true meaning—that He represented the eternal spirit of

Truth and the principle of Good—but failing to find anything in the sentence deeper than the surface significance they broke into menacing cries:

"Blasphemy! heresy! Kill Him! Stone Him!"

A scene of uproar and confusion instantly prevailed; the general crowd scattered, the pharisees rushed off to the outer court where heaps of building stones for the uncompleted portions of the Temple were lying, and the disciples gathered about Jesus.

When the would-be executioners returned armed with the stones, large and small, Jesus was nowhere to be seen. He with His disciples had walked along in the shadow of the colonnade and out into the darkness of the street.

THE BLIND MAN WHO SAW

On the Sabbath in the streets Jesus noticed a young man sitting in the still and detached attitude of the blind at a corner which was evidently his regular stance. He stopped and spoke compassionately to him. The disciples who were with Him looked on interestingly; they had just been discussing the old problem of the connection between sin and suffering which was still the cause of endless speculation among the religious scholars of the time.

"Teacher," said one, seizing the opportunity thus presented, "I wonder who is to blame for this man's condition? Why was he born blind? Is it a result of his own sin or that of his parents?"

It was a thoroughly rabbinical question and asked in all sincerity. Jesus did not enter into a discussion of the entail of retribution which could not have been understood.

"Neither," He replied briefly, "but as he is here he

will manifest the pity and the power of God. I will cure him."

"But, Teacher," the others reminded Him nervously, "this is the Sabbath and we are in Jerusalem."

"I must do the work of Him who sent me while it is day; the night comes when no man can work. You have heard me saying that I am the light of the world. Therefore I will give light to this blind man."

To their surprise instead of uttering the magical words they expected He bent down, lifted a morsel of earth and mixed it with spittle to form a kind of clay. Bidding the man rise He smeared this upon his eyes. Their wonder increased, for it was a common practice among pseudo-doctors to adopt such a method.

"Go," He commanded, "and wash your eyes in the pool of Siloam."

Then the disciples realised how wisely and skilfully He was handling a delicate situation. Already a crowd of severe-looking sabbatarians was gathering, and to have effected a cure then and there would have precipitated a crisis. And the use of the clay was not only an excuse to send the man to a distance but through auto-suggestion to give him confidence in the treatment.

Stopping a moment to ask the physician's name the beggar went clattering away, tapping the pavement and the walls with his staff, his sightless face quivering with excitement. When he reached the pool he laved his eyes and there flashed before him a world of light and colour and beauty such as he had never imagined. He walked back through the streets like one in a dream, gazing, as a stranger does, upon all the objects he saw, but always returning in thought to the unknown Man who had said "I am the light of the world."

As he neared his home the people who knew him watched him in astonishment.

"Is it the blind beggar?"

"Yes, it is."

"No, it cannot be—though he is like him."

"But this man can see."

They ran after him and asked him.

"I am the same man," he said.

"Then who cured you?"

"A doctor called Jesus: He made some clay and placed it on my eyes and told me to wash them in the pool of Siloam, and I did so and I saw."

"Where is this Jesus?"—it was a common name and they did not connect it with the prophet.

"I do not know where He is now."

"If He made clay and cured you to-day He has broken the Law," said a pharisee, "and the Council officers must know of it. It is our duty to inform them."

When the Sabbath was ended they took him to the Temple and related to a number of pharisaic members of the Council what had happened.

"Let him tell his own story," they said, and he repeated what they had heard.

"Jesus of Nazareth of course," some said. "Well He cannot come from God as He claims to do since He does not keep the Sabbath."

"Strange," remarked others thoughtfully. "How can a sinner do what He does?"

They turned to the man.

"What do you think about the man who cured you?"

"He is certainly a prophet."

"Perhaps he is lying," one suggested in an aside. "Where is the proof that he was born blind? We should have the evidence of his parents."

"Fetch his parents," was the order to the attendants.

The father and mother were brought; both were nervous and afraid of these stern ecclesiastics, for they were aware that citizens in league with the new Teacher were in danger of excommunication and punishment.

"Take the man outside," said the president: then to the parents:

"This man—is he your son?"

"Yes."

"Was he born blind?"

"Yes."

"How then does he see now?"

"We know he is our son," they reiterated cautiously, "and that he was born blind, but how he sees now we do not know, neither do we know who cured him. But he is of age and can speak for himself. Ask him."

The man was called in again.

"You must give the glory of your cure to God: this man you speak of is a sinner."

"I do not know whether He is a sinner or not," was the dogged reply. "One thing I do know that once I was blind and that now I see."

They began to cross-examine him.

"What did He do to you?"

"I have already told you. Why do you want to hear it again?" he exclaimed impatiently: he had learnt something of Jesus since his cure and resented their attitude. With an air of innocent inquiry he added: "Do you want to become His disciples?"

"Take care!" they stormed. "It is you who are His disciple. We are disciples of Moses. We know that God was with Moses, but of this fellow we know nothing."

"Why! That is surprising!" he went on with mock

humility. "You learned men do not know about Him and yet He has opened my eyes! Does God work through sinners? Is it not only those who love and obey Him that He hears? Has any one ever heard of blind eyes being opened? Surely if this man were not from God He could not have done this thing?"

"You dare to teach us: you who were born in sin as your blindness proves! Cast him out!"

The attendants seized him roughly, pushed him to the door, and threw him into the street.

All Jerusalem was soon aware of the incident and Jesus, hearing that the man's lot amongst his neighbours was not happy, sought him out and comforted him.

"Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

"Who is He, Sir? I want to believe."

"You have both seen Him and heard Him. I am He."

"Sir, I do believe."

Jesus turned to some pharisees who were dogging His steps and said pointedly:

"They who are blind, see; and they who see are blind."

They did not understand.

"Are we blind?" they asked superciliously.

"If you were blind you would not know that you sin; but you boast that you see and so your sin remains."

"He is mad!" cried one. "What is the use of listening to Him?"

"One wonders," said others. "He does not speak like a madman. Could a madman open the eyes of the blind?"

CONCERNING LOST SOULS

Jesus left John to help and strengthen the disciples in Jerusalem—he was well known there through his business connections—and proceeded to carry out His plan of campaign in Peræa. The tour of the seventy had prepared the people for His coming. It was the Galilee days over again and much of His teaching was repeated. He attracted all classes who brought their sick, their deformed, and their insane to Him for healing. His simple gospel was attractive to men and women whose lives were enmeshed in a complicated web of religious duties, but as many of these were shallow-minded and emotional He was careful to explain that citizenship in His Kingdom was not so easy as it seemed. To one of the first large gatherings who listened to Him He said:

"From what you have heard you may think that I have come to give peace to the earth. That is true. But in one sense I have rather come to cause division. For my sake homes will be divided against themselves and a man's foes will be the members of his own household. The father will be at variance with his son and the son with his father: the mother will be against her daughter and the daughter against her mother. For he that loves his father or mother or son or daughter or his own life more than me will not be worthy of me. He that tries to save himself will ruin himself, but he that sacrifices his lower interests for my sake will save his higher life. Therefore count the cost of discipleship. Which of you intending to build a tower would not first sit down and see whether he had money enough to finish it? Otherwise you might find that after laying the foundation your

means were already exhausted and you could not do more so that people would laugh at your folly."

A smile passed over the gathering for the allusion was topical. Pilate had begun to construct an aqueduct but had been forced to stop for want of funds.

"Or," He went on, "what king warring against another does not sit down first and calculate whether with ten thousand men he will be able to defeat the other with twenty thousand because if he cannot he will be compelled to ask for terms of peace."

This second illustration also appealed to them, for Jesus seemed to have in mind a recent defeat of Herod by Aretas as a result of the divorce incident.

"So," Jesus added, "whoever will not consider well what he is doing and will not renounce everything that hinders his spiritual life cannot be my disciple. To be one needs the highest qualities—wisdom, courage, perseverance. But even worldly men will cultivate these for their own ends. For instance, a certain rich man had a steward who was reported to him as being dishonest. He called him and said, 'I hear that you have been misappropriating my money and goods. Give me an account of your stewardship and then take your dismissal.' The man went away. 'What shall I do?' he said. 'I have lost my position. I cannot dig, to beg I am ashamed. Ah, I know!' He called together those who were in debt to his master and said to one, 'How much do you owe?' 'A hundred barrels of olive oil,' was the reply. 'Take your bill and make it fifty.' To another he asked the same question. 'I owe a hundred quarters of wheat.' 'Write eighty.' When the master heard of it he laughed at the ingenious way in which the steward had sought favour from those likely to help him. 'Truly,' he said, 'men

of the world are wiser than the children of light!' "

The attitude of the pharisees and priests was similar to what it had been at first in Galilee. They knew of Him only in a general way and were curious to see and hear Him, and sometimes they invited Him to their homes. They desired specially to hear His views on the Sabbath question, and they put Him to the test on more than one occasion.

One Sabbath a leading pharisee asked Him to a cold collation. When He arrived He found a little gathering of guests in the court. In His way was a sick man, a wretched-looking object, afflicted with dropsy. Jesus knew why he was there and a quiet scorn came into His eyes. He glanced round at the eager faces and answering their unspoken thought, "Will He cure him?" said:

"Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?"

He waited for the answer but none came.

He turned to the man and with a kind word and touch healed and dismissed him.

To the guests he continued:

"If any of you had a child or even an ox that fell into a well would you not draw him out on the Sabbath day? Have I then violated the Sabbath rest by curing this man of his terrible malady?"

There was only a self-conscious silence. His manner and His tone, both so assured and authoritative, stifled protest.

Entering the dining-room Jesus noticed how the principal guests went as if by right to the places of honour while others pushing forward seized the next best. He said nothing at the moment, but after the meal when all were relaxed He tactfully gave them a lesson in humility. Remarking on what had occurred He said:

"When you are invited to any gathering—say to a

wedding banquet—do not pick out the best seats, lest a more distinguished guest than yourself arrives and the host has to ask you to give up your place to him and you have the shame of removing to a lower seat. Rather take the lowest seat so that when the host sees you there he will ask you to come up higher and you will be honoured before the other guests. I am telling you what is the law in the Kingdom of God—every one who exalts himself will be humbled and every one who humbles himself will be exalted. That law," He added, addressing His host smilingly, "is different from the one which prevails in your social life. When you give a dinner or supper you ask your friends and relatives and rich neighbours; do you not do this because they can ask you back again? When you give a banquet you should rather call in the poor and the maimed and the lame and the blind who cannot repay you. You will find more happiness in doing this and you will be recompensed in the hereafter."

One of the guests who had been listening intently leant back and half-unconsciously murmured:

"Happy must be the man who feasts in the Kingdom of God."

Jesus caught the words and added:

"Yes—but how few care to do it! How many of the chief men, the rich and the cultured, refuse? Listen; a man gave a great feast and invited a large number of guests. When all was ready he sent his summoner as usual to notify them. But all without exception began to make excuses. One said that he had just bought a farm and had to inspect it; another pleaded that he had bought five pair of oxen and was about to test them; another intimated that he was married—and so on. The servant returned and reported the refusals to his master who was indignant at their

discourtesy. He told the man to go out into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in the poor and the blind and the maimed and the lame. He did so and announced that there was still room. Then he was ordered to scour the country highways and byways and fetch all he could find there and the places were filled. And not one of those who had been invited tasted of the feast."

The pharisees had only a vague sense of something in the parable directed against themselves and remained sullenly silent; but the disciples thought they read the meaning—He was evidently alluding to John the Baptist and the rejection of his message by the religious leaders of the country, and indicating that the poor and the outcasts of the world would take advantage of God's goodness.

Jesus did not dine and sup only with the pharisees. He went wherever He was invited, caring nothing for the character or status of the host, thus reaching people to whom otherwise He would not have had access, religious outcasts, sinners, all those ostracised and despised by the self-righteous members of society. These gathered round Him, hearing Him gladly, and from them He secured most of His new disciples.

Why a prophet should associate with this low and despicable class was a mystery to the pharisees. On one occasion they found Him in the midst of a mass of moral wreckage, waifs and strays of humanity, and pushing to the front they asked loudly:

"Why do you, a holy teacher, consort with wretches such as these and eat with them?"

At the scornful words and looks the people seemed to shrivel up; they shrank back hiding their faces and muttering.

"A simple parable will explain why," said Jesus in

His cool, quiet voice. "If you owned a hundred sheep and lost one what would you do? Would you not leave the ninety and nine at pasture and go and search for the one that was lost until you found it? Would you not place it on your shoulder and when you got back would you not say to your friends, 'Rejoice with me for I have found the sheep that was lost'? Even so there is more joy in heaven over a single sinner who repents than over ninety and nine who do not require to repent."

There were women listening in the group and Jesus, always ready to bring them within the range of His teaching, spoke again:

"I will give you another illustration. A woman has ten shillings and loses one. Will she not light her lamp and sweep the floor and search carefully until she finds it? When she does you may be sure that in her delight she will tell her neighbours that they may rejoice with her. So I say there is joy in heaven over any one who repents."

Many a desolate soul was listening to these gracious words, men and women who visualised the homely pictures and understood and were strangely stirred. But they had wandered far; they had lost their higher natures irrecoverably and were sunk in a slough of self-indulgence and low habit. If only some merciful saviour would come and search for them and take them back into a region of purity and peace!

As if answering their thoughts Jesus went on:

"Listen to another parable. A certain man had two sons. The younger, tired of his quiet life and eager for adventure, said to his father, 'Give me now my share of the property.' The father agreed. As soon as he received it the son turned everything into money and went abroad to a far country where he lived riot-

ously and squandered all he possessed. A terrible famine arose in the land, he began to be in want, and his evil companions left him. Compelled to seek employment he engaged himself to a farmer who sent him out into the fields to feed the swine. So poor and so hungry was he that he was fain to eat the carob-tree pods which formed their food. In his loneliness and misery he came to his senses and said to himself, 'Here I am perishing of hunger, and even the hired servants of my father have enough and to spare. I will arise and go to my father and say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against God and against you and am no more worthy to be called your son, but make me simply one of your hired men and I will be content.'

"Acting on the resolve he came back to his father who had never ceased to watch for his return. While yet far off his father saw him and ran to him and, despite his rags, embraced and kissed him affectionately. 'Father,' cried the lad, 'I have sinned against heaven and you and do not deserve to be your son.' For answer the father called to his servants, 'Go quickly, find the best robe and sandals and ring and put them on him, and kill the fatted calf. We must feast and make merry, for here is my son who was lost and is found.'

"The house was soon in a bustle of happy activity, so that when the elder son, who had been in the fields, came near he heard the sound of music and dancing. Calling one of the servants he asked what it meant. 'Your brother has come back safe and sound and your father has killed the fatted calf and we are making merry.' And he was indignant and would not go in.

"Then his father came out and sought to comfort him and persuade him to join them. 'But, father,' he said, 'I have served you faithfully all these years and

have never disobeyed any of your commands, and yet you have never acted like this to me; you have never killed even a kid that I might enjoy myself with my friends. But as soon as this prodigal son of yours returns, this wastrel who has spent all his living with harlots, you kill the fatted calf!' 'Dear son,' the father replied, 'you and I are always together, and all that I have is yours. But it is right that we should be glad, for your brother who was dead has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.'"

Fascinated with the story the crowd of nondescripts before Him had listened with intent absorption, and when the music of the voice died away they still remained as if under a spell. The silence was broken by a sobbing sigh which passed over the throng like a whisper of wind. Souls in a far country were communing with themselves. This was a new aspect of their problem. Their case was not hopeless; they need not passively wait until some outside force came and dragged them out of the mire; they could themselves rise and go, as a child goes to his father, and obtain God's forgiveness and help. As they slowly scattered not a few were repeating humbly but hopefully: "I will arise and go to my Father."

But the elder brothers amongst them, the pharisees, went away indignant, clad in that armour of self-righteousness which no teaching seemed able to pierce.

SHOCKS

After one of His addresses a pharisee invited Him to come to breakfast and meet some friends. Jesus knew that there was an intention to trap Him in conversation and humiliate Him, and He went at once, walking straight in, and threw Himself down on the

couch at the table. His host regarded Him with unfeigned surprise.

"Sir," he said reprovingly, "do you not wash before meals?"

"You pharisees," was the reply, "are very particular about cleaning the outside of the cup and plate, but what of the inside? Are not your hearts foul with evil? Oh, foolish man. He who made the outside made the inside also, and requires that the spirit be as pure as the skin. Cleanse what is within and then nothing will be unclean for you. There is nothing unclean but sin."

These words were spoken calmly but sternly, for Jesus had no pity for such hard and self-sufficient men who caricatured the religious spirit. He knew that while outwardly they courted Him they were really His opponents. Fearlessly He went on:

"Woe to you pharisees! You pay tithes on your petty garden produce, your mint and dill and cummin and rue, and ignore love and humility and justice and the larger matters of life. Without neglecting the former you ought to pay attention to the latter. Woe to you! You love the front seats in the synagogues and the obsequious bows and salutes in public resorts. You are in reality nothing but unclean tombs and the people do not know it."

A scribe-lawyer, also a pharisee, interrupted Him sharply:

"In saying this you are insulting us also."

"Yes. Woe also to you, custodians and expounders of the Law. You devise regulations which lay heavy burdens upon the people and you yourselves will not touch them with your fingers—you know how to evade them! You have taken away the key which unlocks the door of knowledge and truth; you will not enter

yourselves and those who wish to enter you hinder."

Such a thrust at their self-esteem and pride roused them to a white heat of anger. Thenceforward they were His bitter enemies and sought every means of belittling Him and entangling Him in talk that they might bring Him within the clutch of the civil government. A common topic was Herod's divorce, though it was perilous for any one to discuss it in public. Divorce was a subject involving points of legal nicety much debated by the various schools, and the pharisees thought it might be possible to entrap Jesus into some injudicious statement which would bring Him into trouble. One day a number approached Him, and with the air of genuine enquirers asked:

"Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?"

He had dealt with the same matter in Galilee, but on this occasion He went into it more fully in order that there might be no uncertainty left in their minds:

"Have you not read in your scriptures that the Creator made man and woman? That is true. Therefore a man leaves his parents and marries a woman and the pair become one flesh. They are not two but one. What God has joined man cannot separate."

This, so far, they knew.

"Why, then," they continued, "did Moses permit a man to divorce his wife merely by presenting her with a written notice of separation?"

"Moses had to legislate to suit the moral and social conditions of his time—all men's laws correspond to the state of society in which they live. But God's law has existed from the beginning and recognises no passing conditions; it is the ideal law which, soon or late, must rule the lives of men. Marriage cannot be dissolved. Whoever divorces his wife and marries an-

other violates God's law. In God's Kingdom there can be no occasion for divorce."

This statement was unequivocal; it went beyond the views of the opposing schools right to the heart of the question, and it also inferentially condemned the act of Herod. It was a more incriminating reply than the pharisees had hoped for and they went away satisfied.

To the Twelve it was a pronouncement which gave them something of a shock, and in private they questioned Jesus regarding it. He repeated and amplified what He had said, adding that if a woman also put away her husband and married another man she was guilty of breaking God's law. No woman under the Jewish law had the right of divorcing her husband, and He therefore lifted the matter out of a purely local atmosphere and taught that marriage was not something which was regulated or affected by national or racial ideas and customs, but a spiritual union which was indissoluble wherever it was entered into.

"Then," they said, "if this is God's law it is better for a man not to marry at all."

"Do not be foolish. Each man knows his own case and, under God, can do what is right. I cannot say more. He that is intelligent will understand."

The attitude of Jesus to women, His quiet insistence on their equality with men, made a profound impression upon those of the sex who heard Him, although even they did not realise how far-reaching a change he was introducing. They showed their gratitude by flocking to His meetings, taking their children with them, infants in arms and older boys and girls, that He might, as the old custom was, lay His hands upon them and bless them.

On one occasion the disciples saw mothers urging

their children forward, and thinking they would annoy Him intercepted them and ordered them back. Jesus noticed their action and called out:

"Do not forbid the children to come to me. Do you not know that the Kingdom of God is composed of such as these?"

The children ran forward and clustered about Him. As He looked down upon their vivid, eager faces His heart was stirred and one by one He took them up tenderly in His arms, the infants also whom the mothers handed to Him, and blessed them. To the spectators it was a remarkable sight, for here was a great prophet, mighty in word and deed, treating children as if they also possessed rights and a status in the social economy of the world. A few words gave them the clue; children represented simplicity, trustfulness, sweetness; and except one had the heart and mind of a child he would not enter into His Kingdom.

At a distance, looking on, stood one of the younger rulers of the synagogue, a man of position and wealth, anxious to have speech with Jesus, but disinclined to make himself conspicuous by going up to Him. When the crowd broke and Jesus was leaving he remained for a moment in acute indecision; then his eagerness overcame his sense of dignity and he ran after Him and bowed low.

"Teacher," he said respectfully, "what good thing must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Jesus cast a penetrating glance upon him and saw that he was in earnest—clearly a thoughtful and enquiring spirit.

"Why do you ask me concerning goodness? God is good. If you want to enter into life keep His commandments. Do you not know them?"

"Yes, but which?"

"Do not kill; do not be unchaste; do not steal: do not bear false witness. Honour thy father and mother."

"Teacher, all these I have faithfully kept since my youth."

Jesus regarded him with kind and loving eyes: here was a young man after His own heart.

"What do I lack?" urged the suppliant, conscious that though morally impeccable he had not yet experienced the best which life could give. He was typical of many Jews who found no satisfaction of spirit in the mere observance of ceremonial duties.

Jesus met him on his own level: He would test him by his conventional ideals and discover whether his legalist faith possessed sufficient dynamic power to lift him into a higher region. Would he be willing to make a complete surrender of himself and his fortune to God?

"If you would be perfect," He replied, laying emphasis on the "perfect," "go and sell your property and give the money to the poor and come and follow me. By so doing you will lay up treasure for yourself in heaven."

The face of the man was a study: astonishment, bewilderment, disappointment, flitted over it: He stood for a little, and then saluting Jesus walked slowly and sadly away.

Jesus turned to His disciples:

"You see how hard it is for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven."

The disciples were not less astonished than the ruler, and so perplexed that they did not know what to answer: they looked like a group of children puzzled over a statement which they could not comprehend.

"Children" Jesus did call them, but in an affection-

ate way. "Children, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to pass into the Kingdom of God."

Completely nonplussed they asked:

"Who then can possibly be saved?"

"It appears an impossibility to you that rich men should be excluded from the Kingdom. But it is not God or their riches that exclude them but themselves. They place a false value on their wealth: they trust in it rather than in spiritual life—are they not the chief men in all the synagogues simply because they are rich?"

The disciples began to understand. Peter said with satisfaction:

"We at any rate have left all and followed you."

"There is no one who has left his family or his property for my sake and the sake of the Kingdom who will not receive compensation even now, and afterwards life everlasting."

"How many, Sir, will be saved? Only a few?" asked one of the crowd.

"Who can tell? Take thought for yourself. Strive to enter the narrow door into the House of the Kingdom. For when the Master has risen and shut the door after the guests have arrived you can stand and knock and cry 'Lord, open to us' and He will not. 'I do not know you,' He will say. You may tell Him 'Why, we ate and drank in your presence: you taught in our streets!' And He will reply 'I do not know you. Away, you evildoers!' And you will be surprised that you are shut out when so many from the east and west and north and south have gone into the Kingdom. For many who expect that they will be first there will find themselves last, and there are others who imagine they will be last who will be first."

He looked at Peter and the other disciples as He said the final words and they felt rebuked. They were still thinking too much of achieving distinction and meriting special reward. To deepen the impression He told them a parable:

"A vine-grower went out early one morning to hire workers to pick his grapes. He selected a number from men waiting in the market place, engaging them at the rate of a shilling per day. At intervals thereafter he returned and hired every man he could find, agreeing with each batch to pay them whatever sum he deemed, in his judgment, was right. In the afternoon at five o'clock he still came across men standing idle and asked them the reason. 'Because no one has employed us,' they replied. 'Well, go even now into my vineyard and help the others.' At six o'clock he told his manager to pay each worker one shilling, beginning with the last hired. This was done. When those taken on first saw that all were receiving alike they complained. 'Why is this? These men only spent an hour at work and they are made equal with us who have been toiling all day in the scorching heat.' The vine-grower replied, 'Comrade, did you not agree with me to work for a shilling? I have given you the shilling. I am not wronging you. If I choose to give any one the same pay what is that to you? Can I not do what I like with my own? Do you object because I am generous?' So," added Jesus, "in God's kingdom, where only love rules, the last shall be first and the first last."

Turning to the general assemblage again He said:

"There are men who know their master's will but will not do it—these will be severely punished. There are others in ignorance of His will who do things opposed to Him; these will not be so heavily pun-

ished. For unto whom much is given, of him much is required; and to whom men have committed much, of them they will ask the more."

That He was speaking of high spiritual matters in parable they knew, but they felt rather than understood His drift. Their thoughts, accustomed to the idea that all calamities were the direct result of wickedness, turned to a recent tragic occurrence:

"Teacher," they said, "have you heard what has befallen some Galilee pilgrims in Jerusalem? They fell out with the Romans, and Pilate ordered them to be massacred in the Temple while they were sacrificing."

"And do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than others because they suffered such a punishment? I tell you No. All sin involves retribution, and unless you who think you are righteous repent you also will incur the penalty of your sins. What of the eighteen Judean workmen who were buried in the accident at the tower of Siloam? Were they worse offenders than any of the other citizens of Jerusalem? No. Take heed, therefore; look to yourselves. There was a man who had a fig tree in his garden and came to look for fruit on it but found none. To his gardener he said, 'This is the third year in which there has been no fruit on this tree; cut it down, it is merely taking up room.' But the gardener pled for the tree. 'Give it one more chance,' he said. 'I will loosen the earth about it and put in manure: if it bear next year well and good, but if not we shall cut it down.' Do not be like the unfruitful tree. Be rather like faithful servants who wait the late arrival of their master. Let your loins be girded and the lights burning, that when He comes you may open immediately to Him. Happy are they whom their Master thus finds watching, for He will reward them."

"Lord, is this parable meant for us or for all?"

"I will answer by another. A master chooses a steward and places him in control of his household and departs. If he is a wise servant he will rule well, and when his master comes and finds him giving faithful service he will promote him to a more influential position. But if the servant takes advantage of his master's long absence and begins to ill-use the servants and be gluttonous and drunken, the master may come on a day and at an hour when he is not expected and will dismiss him. He that is faithful in minor matters will be faithful in great, and he that is dishonest in small things will be dishonest in larger affairs. If one abuses a worldly trust he cannot be entrusted with the higher things of God."

PLAIN SPEAKING ON PRAYER

As in Galilee, the pharisees were continually asking for proofs of His authority and mission. They told Him that they would be satisfied and believe in Him if He would only demonstrate His power in a striking way. But He had no faith in them: He knew human nature too well. From the first the people had cried for "signs" and "signs" had been given them. To them these were miracles or acts outside normal world-law, and yet how many did not believe! Belief had nothing to do with such exhibitions: faith was not dependent on demonstrations of law, no matter how spectacular. He told the pharisees so plainly, and to illustrate His meaning He gave them a parable in which He adopted their conventional imagery the better to make them understand.

"There was once a rich man," He said, "who was clothed in purple and fine linen and lived in splendour

regardless of the sufferings of the poor. Outside his gate lay a beggar named Lazarus who was covered with ulcers and in so sad a state that even the unclean dogs of the streets came and licked his sores and he was unable to prevent them. What he begged for was merely the scraps that fell from the rich man's table. In the course of time he died and was carried by angels to the paradise of felicity, to 'Abraham's bosom.' The rich man also died and went to 'gehenna' where lost souls are in torment. There he caught sight of Abraham and Lazarus afar off and cried: 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue for I am in agony in these flames.' But Abraham said, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you enjoyed every possible good thing and Lazarus only evil fortune; now he is in comfort and you are in anguish. Besides, between us and you there exists a great gulf to prevent people crossing from one side to the other.' To which the rich man replied: 'I entreat you then to send Lazarus to my father's house and warn my five brothers to live aright lest they too come to this place of torture.' 'They have Moses and the prophets,' Abraham told him, 'let them obey these.' 'No,' cried the lost soul, 'these are not enough: but they will heed and repent if one goes back from the dead.' 'If they do not listen to these great moral leaders neither will they believe even if one rise from the dead.' "

It was a picture-story which they understood, but it only angered them the more. His popularity was so great, however, that there was no prospect of proceeding against Him while He remained in Peræa. Their only hope was to drive Him into Judea. His statement regarding divorce had been duly conveyed

to Herod, whose annoyance gave them sufficient excuse for approaching Jesus. A number came up to Him with an air of importance.

"We advise you to leave Peræa," they said. "We learn that Herod is plotting to kill you. You had better get out of his territory and go to Judea."

That there was something in their hint Jesus knew, but He looked at them with an understanding smile:

"You can go and tell that—that fox," he said, and enjoyed their surprise at His boldness, "what I am doing—teaching and healing—and that in my own time I go to Jerusalem. But is it not at Jerusalem," He added pointedly, "that prophets are killed?"

He continued to use the synagogues. One day He noticed among the worshippers the figure of a woman bent double with an affliction of the spine. He called to her and she came and He descended from the tribune and laid His hand gently upon her, saying:

"Woman, you are healed of your weakness."

She straightened herself and stood erect and in her joy burst into a torrent of grateful words which were echoed by the congregation. This proved too much for the equanimity of the president, who came forward with other officials and cried indignantly to the people:

"There are six days in the week on which you ought to work—come then and be healed and do not desecrate the Sabbath day."

Swiftly came the stern words from Jesus:

"You hypocrites! On the Sabbath do you not unloose your stock from the stall and lead them to the water to drink? And should not this woman be released from the chains of her affliction on the Sabbath?"

So deft a thrust delighted the congregation, who

eagerly waited for the reply, but the officials, discomfited, only mumbled, and visited their wrath upon those about them.

He looked on these men, so invincibly self-righteous, so contemptuous of others less outwardly strict than themselves. Quietly He spoke:

"Two men, a pharisee and a tax-gatherer, went up to the Temple to pray. The pharisee stood apart from all others, flaunting his piety and praying in a pompous manner, 'God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, dishonest, immoral, or even like the tax-gatherer here. I fast twice in the week and on my income I pay tithes.' But the tax-gatherer stood humbly in a corner and would not lift so much as his eyes to heaven, but gazed on the ground and beat his breast, crying: 'God be merciful to me a sinner.' I tell you this man went home forgiven and accepted rather than the pharisee, for, as I have repeatedly said, every one that exalts himself will be humbled, and every one who humbles himself will be uplifted."

In the open air, where an immense crowd had gathered, he referred indirectly to His opponents:

"My friends, I tell you do not be afraid of those who are able to kill the body and not the soul; these cannot do you any lasting hurt. You should rather fear those who can destroy not only your body but your soul also, for there is no recovery from that double hurt. But you will be safe if you keep within the protection of God. Sparrows are sold for a trifle in the eating-houses, and yet not one of them is forgotten or ignored in the system of God. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. Why, the very hairs of your head are numbered!"

A man came up to Him. "You are wise, Teacher,"

he said. "I want you to speak to my brother. He will not give me my share of our inheritance but he will heed you."

"Man," replied Jesus quietly, "who made me a judge to decide your family affairs?"

Taking advantage of the interruption He addressed the crowd:

"Take care! Avoid all covetousness, for a man's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses. Listen. The fields of a rich man bore such heavy crops that his barns were not large enough to hold them. 'I will do this,' he said to himself. 'I will pull down my granaries and build larger ones, and in these I will store my produce and then I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have sufficient to last you many years, take your ease, eat, drink and be merry." ' But God said to him, 'Oh, foolish man, this night your soul is being demanded of you, and who will have all that you have gathered?' So it is with those who amass earthly treasure for themselves and are not rich in spiritual things. They have to leave their wealth and they possess nothing with which to enter heaven. No servant can serve two masters; he will attach himself either to one or other and despise the one he does not obey. You cannot serve both God and mammon at the same time."

The pharisees who were listening scoffed at the words; as a class they were lovers of money; and they said He was foolish.

"Ah!" he said. "You can justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; what men esteem and exalt may be an abomination to Him."

He felt the hostile forces closing in around Him and often retired for communion with His Father. His disciples marvelled at the strength and peace He

brought back with Him, and once, touched with a feeling that was akin to envy, one said impulsively:

"Lord, teach *us* to pray!" adding by way of excuse, "John used to teach us in those days by the Jordan."

"You cannot be *taught* to pray: it must come undirected from the heart, otherwise it is no better than the formal prayer of the Jews. I can therefore only give you an example—not for repetition but by way of suggestion. Pray simply and shortly like this: 'Father, hallowed be Thy name, Thy Kingdom come, give us day by day what we need, forgive us our sins against Thee as we forgive those who sin against us, and let us not give way when we are tried.' But always pray as you feel, according to your need."

"How often, Lord," said Peter, "should I forgive those who sin against me? Seven times?"

"Seven times, Peter? Say rather seventy times seven! There is no limit to forgiveness in my Kingdom. If you do not forgive those who sin against you how can you expect God to forgive you your sins against Him? Here is a parable for you. A king decided to settle with his servants. In the settlement one servant who owed him over two million pounds declared he had no money with which to pay his account and the king ordered him to be sold along with his wife and children and all he possessed. Falling down before his master the man cried: 'Lord, have patience with me and I will repay you in full.' Out of pity the king released him and cancelled his debt. No sooner was he at liberty than he approached one of his fellow-servants who owed him about four pounds, and taking him by the throat demanded the amount. His debtor fell at his feet and cried imploringly: 'Have patience with me and I will repay you in full!' But the man refused, and had him im-

prisoned until he could pay the debt. When his fellow-servants saw what had been done they were greatly distressed and went and informed the king, who called the man and said, 'You villain! I forgave you all your debt because you implored me to do so: should you not have had mercy on your fellow-servant even as I had on you?' In his anger he handed him over to be punished until he could pay his own debt. So you will suffer if you do not forgive your brother from the heart.

"In your life of prayer never be discouraged. Ask and you will receive, seek and you will find, knock and the door will open to you. Listen again to a homely parable. Suppose you had a friend and went to him at midnight and said, 'Lend me three loaves for a friend who has arrived from a journey for I have nothing in the house to place before him'; and he called out, 'Do not trouble me: everything is locked up and we are all in bed; I cannot get up now,' you might feel inclined to go away. But if you went on knocking he would rise and give you what you want, not because he was your friend but because of your persistency. Do you not think that if this happens on earth it will not—much more—happen in heaven? You will always obtain what is right for you to get. Some of you are fathers. If your son asked you for a loaf would you hand him a stone? If he asked for a fish would you present him with a serpent? If for an egg would you give him a scorpion? If you, who are men, know how to give your children what is good, how much more does your Father in heaven know what to give to those who ask Him.

"Again: in a certain town there was a judge who had neither reverence for God nor respect for man. To him appealed a woman, a widow, craving for jus-

tice against one who oppressed her. He declined to move in the matter, but she kept worrying him until he was wearied and at last he said, 'Though I care neither for God nor man I will take her case up and see justice done in order to get rid of her importunity.' Now if an unprincipled judge acts like this will not God, the all-good and kind, respond to the cry of His people and do what is just and right? Therefore pray to Him at all times. . . . And yet . . . and yet—shall I ever see on earth the faith necessary for such believing prayer?"

"Teacher! Increase our faith!"

"How often have I told you that if you had faith you could do anything! Why, if you had faith as small as a mustard seed you would say to this black mulberry tree, 'Tear up your roots and plant yourself in the sea' and it would obey you!"

They caught the simile, half-humorous, half-serious, and understood. He meant that nothing was impossible to the right spirit.

A TEMPLE MOB

In December the thoughts of Jesus turned again to Jerusalem, whither many Jews were proceeding for the Feast of Dedication, or the Feast of Lights as it was sometimes called on account of the brilliant illuminations associated with it. It was not one of the pilgrimage festivals but had a peculiar significance. A century and a half previously the altar of the old Temple had been desecrated by Syrian idol-worshippers—it was this profanation indeed which roused the religious patriotism of the nation to fever heat and provoked that struggle which gave it political independence. Judas Maccabæus, the nationalist leader,

cleansed the building, took down the polluted altar, storing the stones until there would come a prophet to say what should be done with them; set up a new one which was dedicated with great rejoicing; and ordered that the event should be commemorated every year thereafter. The festival reminded devout members of the race of their second great deliverance from tyrannical rule and the period of their national glory, and set them dreaming and longing for another leader —"that prophet"—who would once more free them from alien domination. It was an opportunity for Jesus to show them that their real hope lay not in political action but in the cultivation and development of the inner life. He would also meet John and hear how he was faring.

Every mile of the upward climb from the semi-tropical Jordan valley brought a drop in temperature, and when He reached the heights He could see the loftier ranges mantled in snow. After resting at Bethany He walked over Mount Olivet, where the air was keen and exhilarating, and stopped to watch a shepherd releasing a flock of sheep from their fold. They scattered over the field, but when he strode up the hill calling them they jerked up their heads and ran after him. Snatching at any green stuff on their way they began to linger and then stayed to feed. Again came the shepherd's cry and again they tore themselves away and rushed after him; and thus, halting and advancing, they passed over the brow of the hill. Jesus smiled to Himself, for His mind was always seeing human analogies in nature.

On reaching Jerusalem He met John and heard his report, and together they paid a visit to the Temple and walked in the outer porch to shelter themselves from the cold. The news of His appearance was

quickly circulated, and He became surrounded by Temple officers and a mixed group of the orthodox and nationalist party who seemed determined to have a definite declaration of His policy.

"How long," they cried, "are you going to keep us in suspense? Tell us once and for all. Are you the messiah or not?"

"I have already told you who I am and what I came to do, but you will not believe me. Are not the things I do in my Father's name sufficient witness and proof of my claim?"

As He looked on the gathering, which was receiving accessions from all sides, the picture He had seen on Mount Olivet came to His mind.

"I will tell you why you do not believe on me," He said. "You do not belong to me, for you are like a flock of sheep who do not know their shepherd or his call. I am not a robber whose object is to steal. I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep and my sheep know me. When a shepherd opens the gate of a sheep-fold he calls to the sheep and leads them out. Then he goes in front of them and they know his voice and follow him. I am not like a hired servant who when he sees a wolf deserts his sheep. A good shepherd will lay down his life for his sheep and I therefore am ready to lay down my life for my sheep. For I have come that they may have life and have it more abundantly than they have ever had. I have one flock here but I have other sheep which do not belong to this fold, and I must bring all together so that there will be one flock and one shepherd. Do not imagine that any one has the power to take my life. When I lay it down it will be of my own accord. This is the will of my Father, for I and my Father are one. . . ."

Although He meant one in aim and purpose and

fellowship, to His hearers it was the old claim and the old challenge. They were horrified. There were no pilgrim crowds to make them hesitate and their passion broke loose. The terrible cry "Stone Him!" rang out. Many ran off and returned with armfuls of sharp limestone blocks. But He stood undismayed and calm, and raising His hand restrained them:

"I have shown you many a good deed. For which of these are you going to stone me?"

"Not for any good deed," they shouted, "but for blasphemy, because you, a man, are making yourself out to be God."

"Why, is it not written in your scriptures 'I said you are gods?' If the Law called those who were inspired gods how can you say that I, who was sent directly by God, blaspheme when I call myself the Son of God?"

It was an argument which made them pause. He went on:

"If I am not doing what God sent me to do, do not believe me, but if I am doing His work, believe the work even though you reject me. The work will show that the Father is in me and that I am in the Father."

The bold words again inflamed the official section of the crowd, and a storm of cries burst forth: "Seize Him!" "Arrest Him!" "Kill Him!" But mingled with these were protesting shouts, "No!" "He is a good man!" "Let Him go!" A mob divided against itself means confusion and irresolution. Jesus, smiling serenely, made a gesture and His fierce assailants shrank back; and down the narrow lane they left He walked with John and quietly passed into the city and out to Bethany.

Thence He proceeded to Jericho and across the

river and up to the ford which had been the scene of the Baptist's early ministry. The impulse of that time had not yet passed away; the people were friendly and He stayed among them and taught and healed at leisure and made many converts. "John the Baptist," they said, "worked no miracles, but all he declared about this man was true."

RESURRECTION AND LIFE

His quiet work and rest were broken by a communication from the sisters at Bethany.

"Lord," ran their simple verbal message, "he whom you love is ill."

That meant Lazarus and Jesus was troubled. He could hear a wistful appeal in the words that He should go and heal him. He remained thoughtful for a time and then turned to the messenger.

"Tell the sisters not to lose hope; the illness will not end in death; it will show the glory of God and the power of the Son of God."

But He gave no indication of proceeding to Bethany. He spent the next two days in meditation and prayer. On the morning of the third day He said to His disciples:

"Now we shall go to Judea."

They were dismayed and expostulated with Him. "Only the other day the Jews there were for stoning you, and you wish to go back again!"

"Children, there are twelve hours of light in the day, and if a man walks during these he does not stumble because he has the light; but if he walks in the night he stumbles because of the lack of it. If we walk in the light of God's will all must go well with us, but if we walk in the darkness of our own will then

we have cause to fear. Now you understand why I go."

After a while He added:

"Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep and I am going that I may awaken him."

"But," they answered mystified, "if that is so he will recover; there is no need to go."

He knew they were thinking of natural sleep and said plainly:

"Lazarus is dead, and for your sakes I am glad I was not there for I intend to show you that your faith is justified."

They were not any the readier to move out of their security, and seeing their reluctance He added:

"Come, let us go."

They looked at each other with foreboding.

"Yes, let us go," said Thomas, the pessimist, resignedly, "and die along with Him."

They rested a short distance from Bethany, Jesus not wishing to appear abruptly amongst the company of mourners, who, He knew, would be gathered in the house. A message was sent up to the sisters. Mary was sitting with friends who were seeking to comfort her. It was Martha who received it and she ran down the road to Jesus.

"Oh, Teacher!" she cried, her self-possession giving way, "if only you had been here my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever you ask God to do He will do it for you."

"Do not grieve, Martha," He said gently. "Your brother will rise again."

"I know that he will rise again at the resurrection on the last day," she replied—for a belief in the resurrection of the just was now common amongst intelligent Jews.

In slow, calm words which thrilled Martha and the little gathering He said:

"*I* am the resurrection and the life: he who believes in me, though he be dead, shall live."

He paused as if to emphasise the extraordinary truth He was stating so simply. He repeated:

"Whoever lives and believes on me will never die; do you believe this?"

"Yes, Lord, you know that I have always believed that you are the messiah, the Son of God."

"Where is Mary?" He asked. "Bring her."

She hurried away and in the house went up quietly to her sister and whispered:

"The Teacher is here and wishes to see you."

Mary rose swiftly. "Where is He?" she asked, with pitiful eagerness.

"Down the roadway a short distance, He and His disciples."

Martha remained to prepare for the reception of her guests and Mary made for the highway, followed by the mourners, wailing dismally, for they thought she was going to the tomb to weep there. When she reached Jesus she fell at His feet, her pent-up emotion found relief in tears, and she sobbed as if her heart were broken. From her lips came the cry that she and Martha had so often repeated during the past sad days:

"Lord, if you had been here he would not have died."

The sorrow of women always touched the sensitive nature of Jesus to the quick. He was deeply moved.

"Where have you laid him?" He said turning tactfully to the others.

"Teacher, come and see."

As they proceeded up the roadway those walking

with Him saw the tears stealing down His cheeks.

"See how He loved him!" they said to each other.

"Why, then," remarked some, "could He not save him from death? He opened the eyes of the blind man in the city."

Martha joined them and they came to the limestone cliff where the cave-tomb was. The entrance was blocked by a large stone. A hush fell upon the company. Through the quiet sunshine came the twittering of birds and the sound of children at play.

"Take away the stone," He said to the men standing by.

"Lord!" It was Martha, matter-of-fact even at this moment. "He has been dead four days and there will be a foul smell."

"Martha, did I not tell you that if you only believed you would see the power of God at work?"

Obeying His gesture the men seized the stone, hauled it to the side, and exposed the opening stark and black.

Jesus stood in the attitude of prayer and they heard Him murmur:

"Father I thank Thee that Thou hearest me. For the sake of those gathered here I ask Thee to manifest Thy power."

A pause: then His voice, clear, strong and commanding, rang out:

"Lazarus, come forth!"

In the dimness of the dark gap a moving shape was seen: bending low it emerged and stood upright: a tall figure with hands and feet wrapped separately in white bandages and the face bound with a napkin, not a corpse but a living man, pale, composed, with a mystic light lingering in his eyes.

Cries of amazement and awe escaped from the

crowd: they were so stupefied at the happening that they could only stand motionless, gazing in a dazed way at the apparition. Jesus recalled them to their senses.

"Untie the wrappings and free him."

Throwing off their terror the men did so, and Lazarus approached Jesus, eager, glad, triumphant. Jesus gave him an affectionate salutation and handed him over to his sisters, a brother from the grave, a man who had known death and yet lived.

He was an object of wonder to the spectators, but Jesus, the amazing man who had conquered death, made the deepest impression upon them. Many even of the strictest type He won over to His side, bringing thèm out of spiritual death into a new and higher life. Thenceforward they believed in Him. There were others whose hearts and minds even this marvel could not move; they were dead beyond the power of resurrection; these flushed with shallow excitement hastened back to Jerusalem to report the matter to ecclesiastical headquarters.

The news was serious. A full meeting of the Sanhedrin was called at which the situation was debated.

"What shall we do? We cannot let Him go on. To leave Him alone as we have done will be fatal. He has followers enough already. Soon every one will be believing on Him. That will mean a revolution and the Romans will finish us as a nation and destroy our Temple and our religion."

After such views had been expressed Caiaphas, the High Priest, crafty and unprincipled, said:

"You are foolish even to talk of leaving Him alone. You cannot do that. Is it not better that one man should die than that the whole nation should perish?"

Death! It was the word lurking at the back of

their minds; the one they had been waiting to hear. Spoken by their president it brought a feeling of relief. The strain was ended. General agreement was expressed. The death of Jesus became the settled policy of the Council; a formal resolution was passed and a public declaration issued outlawing Him and ordering loyal members of the race to inform the authorities of His whereabouts.

He was not, however, without His friends; Nicodemus who had sat silent throughout the deliberations saw to it that He was told of the decision and warned to leave the district and to take Lazarus with Him as he also was in danger of arrest.

Jesus did not intend to play into the hands of His enemies; He quietly vanished into the country district to the north, selecting a secluded village within easy reach of Galilee. It was His purpose when the passover arrived to summon His most devoted followers and women friends and proceed for a final assault on the stronghold of ecclesiasticism.

THE LAST JOURNEY

It was a tranquil period of rest and fellowship, and communion with the Unseen, the last they were to have together; but for the disciples it was shadowed by a vague uneasy sense of impending danger, which, they gathered from Jesus, contained an element of tragedy. Yet they were not without secret hopes of some unexpected development; some sudden convulsion of public opinion and action that would alter the whole situation. When, at the word of Jesus, they emerged from their retreat and joined a Galilean band of friends they knew they were facing a crisis and on the edge of great events.

The usual incidents occurred by the wayside. On the borders of Samaria where a portion of land had been set aside for the outcast lepers, Jews and Samaritans alike, a cry of "unclean" warned them off the ground. But Jesus walked on and saw the lepers, a miserable-looking group of ten, who were standing as if watching for Him.

"Jesus, Teacher, have pity on us!" they cried in a passion of entreaty.

To no earnest appeal of the human heart was Jesus indifferent, but to come into contact just then with leprosy and be subjected to the inconvenient ceremonial law would hinder His journey, and accordingly He called across the intervening space:

"Go and show yourselves to your priests."

Impelled by His tone of authority they turned immediately and walked towards the village. As they went they experienced a sense of change in their bodies and realised that their sores had disappeared and their skins were clean and wholesome. They stopped, transported with delight, and talked excitedly. Jesus watched them with interest. They were debating what they ought to do. Should they turn and thank their healer or should they do as they were told? The Jews of the group had been trained to literal obedience: they thought more of that than of the spirit which should actuate them: they were formalists, the class which, more than any other, roused the scorn and indignation of Jesus. They went on. The Samaritan, overcome with gratitude, ran back praising God for His goodness and, with the freedom of perfect health, came right up to Jesus and fell at His feet, pouring out his thanks in a torrent of speech.

"Did I not cleanse ten men?" asked Jesus. "Where are the other nine? Are you the only one who has re-

turned to express gratitude—and you are a foreigner! . . . Well, rise and go your way, you are healed not only in body but in soul."

The others had been cleansed in body but spiritually remained as they were—it was an incident which illustrated and typified the general attitude of the race.

The little compact company of earnest-faced men and women created a stir along the route. Unconsciously they communicated to others their feeling that something unusual was imminent. Questions were asked. Was the Prophet on His way to take command of the national situation? He Himself was approached. Pharisees in the villages put the matter straightly to Him.

"When is the Kingdom about which you have been preaching coming? May we expect to see it soon?"

Jesus never lost patience with His interrogators, however ignorant and tiresome they were.

"The Kingdom of God," He replied, "cannot be seen: it is not something which is coming suddenly or openly like a material spectacle or event. You will not be able to say 'Look, here it is': or 'See, there it is': You cannot organise it. It is the same as when a farmer casts seed into the earth. While he sleeps and wakes, night and day, the seed sprouts and springs up and grows, how he cannot tell. He does not bring it about: the process is secret, spontaneous, automatic—first the blade, then the ear, and then the full corn in the ear. The Kingdom is the growth of a condition in the hearts of men: and in time it will change the outward state of society. Already it is all about you."

The question sent Him into a reverie of thought, and as they took to the road again He began to talk to His disciples in a strange, symbolic way of the slow and difficult progress of the truth and the terrible fate

of men and communities who outraged the law of God. The past was a guide to the future: He pictured cities which had lost touch with the spiritual elements of life and had been left to the operation of the lower forces of nature, and described their destruction. So in the days to come cities that had despised and banished what was good and revelled in what was evil would be deserted even by the laws which controlled nature, and left to the mercy of earthquake, volcano, fire and flood. How true His prediction was to prove they could not know: the mere statement of the fact bewildered them.

"When, Lord?" they asked in their perplexity.

He pointed to a flock of carrion birds in the distance apparently feasting on some offal.

"Wherever there is a carcase, there the eagles gather together. Wherever lawlessness abounds, there the forces of destruction exist."

It was beyond their comprehension but they instinctively refrained from questioning Him further. He pressed on along the white road with an easy, steady swing as if eager to reach His destination, they following and discussing His words, and the company of friends behind. Now and again a glimpse was obtained of His face: it shone with a kind of inner light, while His expression was so serene, so radiant and so joyous that even His disciples, who knew Him so well, were awed, and those behind were afraid. What did that wonderful light mean? What was going to happen? A dozen possibilities came to their mind, and always in the background lurked the dim expectation and hope of a splendid advent for Him and for them on the world-stage.

Presently, as if divining their thoughts, He called a halt and took the Twelve apart, and once more and explicitly told them what was about to happen:

"I am going to my death: I will be betrayed into the hands of the High Priests and these will sentence me. Then they will hand me over to the Romans who will mock me and spit upon me and scourge me, and then crucify me. But, I shall rise again."

They were silent through sheer inability to conceive the actuality of what He described. He had so often escaped that they believed He would be able again to extricate Himself from the peril He was anticipating. It was impossible to imagine one who claimed to be from God and possessed such superhuman power suffering so degrading, so cruel, so needless a fate as crucifixion. Perhaps, being so highly strung, He was nervous at the prospect of encountering the ecclesiastical body again. So, incredibly stupid and optimistic, they banished their fears and dreamt their dreams of a magnificent inauguration of the Kingdom.

It was of this Kingdom that the whole company talked as they covered the long miles to the Jordan fords and over the salt sands to Jericho. What positions would the Twelve receive? Would any be specially favoured? Salome, the mother of James and John, was ambitious for her sons—they surely ought to obtain good posts, and she wanted to make certain. She said to them:

"I am going to speak to the Teacher about you."

"We will go with you," they replied.

She approached Jesus and made the customary obeisance.

"Well, Salome," He enquired kindly.

"Teacher, we want to ask you a favour."

"Say on."

"Grant that these my two sons may sit beside you as your ministers in the Kingdom you are going to establish."

"Ah, Salome, you do not know what you are asking."

Turning to the young men He said:

"Are you able to drink the cup that I am going to drink?"

"We are," they replied promptly in their abysmal ignorance.

He studied them thoughtfully for a moment:

"Yes, you will indeed suffer with me, but I cannot grant your desire because it is not in my power; it rests with my Father."

They retired, crestfallen; the other disciples, witnessing the incident, questioned them closely and they had to admit their presumption. A storm of indignation broke upon them which Jesus, overhearing, stilled by calling them all before Him. He addressed them as He would contentious children, saying:

"You know how the Roman Emperors rule and how they appoint officers who exercise despotic authority over the people. It is different in my Kingdom: my disciples should not do as they do. How often I have told you that whoever wants to be first among you must be last and the servant of all, just as I, the Son of Man, have not come to be served but to serve and even to give my life for others."

Late in the afternoon they approached Jericho. It was a large and stately city, an oasis among the sand dunes, shaded from the fierce sunlight by innumerable palm trees, and rich in theatres, palaces, rose gardens and balsam groves, but evil in its character. In its hot atmosphere men became morally enervated; life was luxurious and voluptuous, and therefore degraded and effete. Jericho was to prove an illustration of the symbolic words of Jesus that a house built on the sand,

however splendid in its appearance, contains the elements of weakness and ultimate ruin.

Travellers who had passed the party on the road announced their coming, and the news, spreading among the citizens and the passover pilgrims resting before beginning the ascent to Jerusalem, brought out a large crowd to witness His arrival. They lined the thoroughfares at the entrance to the town and hung about the main street in the hope that He might pass that way. When the party was signalled there was a rush for the best places, and even dignified citizens scrambled to points where they could obtain a view.

One of those keenest to see Jesus was Zacchæus, the head of the customs, who, having bought the tax concession for the district and farmed it out, had amassed wealth and was detested by his fellow-townsmen. He was largely the victim of his position, for personally he was, though small and insignificant-looking, a man of kindly and generous heart, and upright in conduct. When informed that Jesus was passing he ran out and along the street after the procession but was unable on account of his short stature to see over the heads of the people who were lined in front. Many, recognising him, resented his efforts to push in and sullenly stood their ground. He ran on behind the row of waiting spectators until he reached a less congested point where stood a sycomore tree with low, wide-spreading branches. Regardless of dignity he climbed it hastily and sat astride a sturdy bough, hot and perspiring but triumphant.

The band of Galileans, wedged in a crush of noisy men and women, came slowly up the street. "Look at Zacchæus!" cried a shrill, derisive voice. "Up the tree!" All eyes were directed to the spot where the

eager face of the little man could be seen peering down at Jesus.

Jesus also heard the cry and looked up. There was something in that intent, wistful gaze that made Him pause. Then:

"Zacchæus, come down, I wish to stay at your house to-night."

The expression on the face of Zacchæus changed to one of utter surprise and then to delight. Sliding to the ground he conducted Jesus with much pride to his home.

The onlookers were scandalised. "He is away with the tax-gatherer." "He is to be the guest of a sinner!" "What a strange thing for a prophet to do!" they said to one another as they scattered.

Zacchæus was not long in being impressed by the personality of Jesus, His courtesy and sweetness, and the charm of His conversation. He talked simply and naturally of life and happiness, of duty and service, of standards of value true and false, and many other things, and Zacchæus was moved as he had never been before: he longed to earn the goodwill of this wonderful teacher and at last came and stood humbly before Him:

"Sir, I am rich and I am going to divide my property and give half to the poor; and if I find that I have defrauded any man in my business I will restore the amount fourfold."

Jesus regarded him with pleasure: He had not been mistaken in His estimate of his character:

"Zacchæus," He said, "joy and peace have come today to this house."

Turning to His disciples He added:

"You wondered why I came here to the house of a

rich but outcast soul: again I say to you that the Son of Man has come to seek and save the lost."

Next morning the hillway leading out of the town towards the foothills was alive with pilgrims, and, assailing them like so many vultures, beggars with their whining appeals. One of these, Bartimæus, who was blind, had been listening to tales of Jesus. "Some say," a comrade had remarked to him, "that He is the messiah, that son of David whom our holy leaders expect. As for me . . ."

"Jesus is coming!"

The cry excited the line of beggars to renewed efforts; the air was filled with their incessant plaints. Bartimæus heard only the confused din of a marching crowd.

"Jesus of Nazareth is passing by," shouted his neighbour.

Instantly he cried out:

"Jesus, son of David, pity me!"

"Peace! be quiet!" angrily said those near him.

"Jesus, son of David, have pity on me," he cried in shriller appeal.

Jesus heard the note of agonised entreaty and stopped.

"Call him," He said to His disciples.

They went over to Bartimæus. "Courage," they whispered, "He is calling you: come."

He threw aside his outer cloak, seized their hands, and trembling with surprise and hope, moved swiftly forward.

"What do you want me to do for you?" asked Jesus.

"Teacher, give me back my sight."

"So be it according to your faith. . . ."

Instantly the dull eye cleared, brightened, and flashed with intelligence and joy.

"Go your way," said Jesus; but the man, a new creature in body and mind, followed Him, praising God for His goodness, and telling every one he met of the wonderful skill of the young prophet.

SHATTERED EXPECTATIONS

Through the sun-scorched defiles the party ascended to Bethany and to the house of Lazarus. The other pilgrims carried the news to Jerusalem, which was already filling up with visitors, as those from a distance usually arrived a week in advance in order that they might have time to perform their various acts of purification for ceremonial uncleanness. Amongst those from Galilee and Peræa the sole topic was Jesus.

"What do you think?" they asked one another. "Will He come to the feast or no? Will He be afraid?"

The sturdy men of Galilee had no doubt that He would come, and, standing in less awe of the authorities than the citizens, they made no secret of their belief. When the intelligence spread that He was at Bethany they were exultant and flushed with hope. Nor was the mass of the city population less excited. Ever since the raising of Lazarus the feeling in favour of Jesus had steadily grown, and the fact that He was back assumed a special significance in their eyes. By a common impulse both pilgrims and citizens flocked to Bethany, even prominent figures in social and religious life stealing out to see Him and the man who had escaped out of the embrace of death.

The ecclesiastical leaders witnessed the exodus with dismay, anger and foreboding. They seemed to have lost their grip on the people; it looked as if there was going to be a great popular upheaval in which they

and their system and their privileges might be overthrown. They got together and plotted and planned. The most active was Annas, an ex-high priest, influential and unscrupulous, who had amassed great wealth by the exploitation of the Temple worshippers during his term of office. Vehemently he urged immediate action. They must put the warrant into force, condemn Jesus and have Him executed. Lazarus also they must put to death.

In the quiet of Sabbath evening Jesus sat at supper with Lazarus and the disciples. Martha as usual was foremost in attending to the guests. Mary in the background assisting her was nervous and distrait. Sensitive to spiritual influences and acutely sympathetic where those she loved were concerned, she sensed the oncoming of some grave disaster and it depressed the temperature of her spirit. She feared for Jesus and, fearing, regarded Him with a solicitude that was wistful, reverential, maternal. Into her mind came the story of that other woman in Galilee—and she a wicked woman—who had given Him of her best, and with the memory came a swift resolve. She, too, would give Him of her best. She had been collecting and treasuring Indian nard, one of the costliest of fragrant oils with which monarchs were anointed, and she had now a pound of it in her alabaster flask.

Acting instantly on her resolve she went for the flask and approached Jesus where He was reclining at the side of the table. For a moment she stood hesitating. Would she anoint His head as was the custom? With a pathetic gesture of humility she knelt and poured out the perfume upon His sandalled feet, and letting down her hair wiped them softly with the long, dark tresses. The sweet aroma spread and pervaded the room.

Jesus understood and smiled, very tenderly; but

some of the disciples were horrified; they had been brought up in the hard school of poverty in which waste was regarded as a crime.

"What waste!" they said to one another.

This emboldened Judas who, as steward and keeper of the common purse, felt it incumbent upon him to reprove the act.

"Yes," he exclaimed loudly that Jesus might hear. "Why was not this ointment rather given to us? We could have sold it and received ten pounds, which could have been given to the poor."

Hypocrite! Little did he care for the poor; he had deteriorated so far that he had become a petty thief, helping himself out of the money of which he had charge; the sale of the ointment would merely have augmented his own unlawful gains.

Jesus swept the table with an admonishing glance.

"Let her alone! She has done a wonderful and beautiful deed; in her humble, loving way she has done what was within her power to anoint me beforehand for my burial. It is an act which will always be told of her as an example of love, and faith, and devotion.

"Judas," He continued, His tone taking on a touch of sadness, "you will find the poor at any time beside you, but me you will not have always."

Which confirmed Judas in his belief that his occupation and opportunities for pilfering would soon be gone.

In the mysterious way in which great crowds are moved and swayed by a single impulse, the pilgrim host in Jerusalem set out next day for Bethany. On the way they broke branches off the palm and olive trees that lined the road and formed into procession as they were accustomed to do in their long journeys, and sang snatches of psalms.

"Hosanna!"—a shout of praise—*"Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna!"*

The words were those with which pilgrims to the city were welcomed. The refrain *"Hosanna"* rang over the deep chasm towards Jerusalem and echoed back from the high walls of the Temple.

Suddenly a voice added:

"Even the King of Israel!"

And the words, electrifying the company, were taken up and chanted along the line.

"Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel! Hosanna!"

Jesus was told of their coming, and as they appeared marching in mass over the brow of Olivet, waving the palm branches and singing, He was profoundly moved and went out to meet them. What did it matter now? Let them have their hour. He also would have His. He would teach the dignitaries enthroned in Jerusalem how frail their tenure would be if He only chose to exert His power; He would prove to them that if He did not take advantage of His opportunities it was not because He could not do so but because that was not His way of conquering the world.

The people surrounded Him. "Master," they pleaded, "come back with us!"

Turning to two of His disciples He said:

"Go over to the village. As you enter it you will find a young ass tethered. Loose him and bring him here. If any one questions you, say 'the Master needs him' and you will be allowed to take him."

The two went off and saw the ass standing at the door of a house. As they untied him and were leading him away the tenant, hearing the noise, came out hastily.

"Stop!" he cried. "What are you doing with my ass?"

"The Master needs him."

His manner changed. "Good—it was arranged—the beast is for Him."

Their arrival at the highway was the signal for another outburst of enthusiasm. Robes were thrown off and the finest selected and placed on the animal. Jesus seated Himself and amidst intense excitement the procession moved forward. Beside themselves with joy the pilgrims cast their cloaks on the ground in front of the ass. After it had walked over them they were lifted and the process was repeated. Others cut down branches of palms and invaded the fields and brought back foliage and grass and strewed them along the road. They were carpeting the path as for a royal personage.

As they reached the crest of the hill, and the houses on the Jerusalem heights began to appear, they broke again into song. The words of the psalm, chanted in unison with the rhythmic swing of their march, rose and rolled in solemn cadence across the sunlit space.

"Bless and preserve Him who comes in the name of the Lord!"

Again daring voices added significant words:

"Blessed is the Kingdom that is coming!"

While others, loyal to tradition, varied the phrase:

"The Kingdom of our Father David!"

The boys in the procession picking up the words added their shrill sweet treble to the deeper voices of the men.

To the minds of some sober, severe pharisees in the company the people were exceeding the limits of propriety, and they approached Jesus to remonstrate.

"Teacher, this is not seemly. Check them—they go too far."

But it was they who were rebuked. "You do not know what you say," He said. "I tell you if they held their peace the very stones on the road would cry out."

The whole extent of the city came into view beyond and above the valley of olive woods and orchards, its Temple and domes and towers veiled in a blue haze and the clear sunshine playing upon all. Jesus, feeling the beauty and wonder of the scene, stopped and gazed upon it. His mind dwelt on the historic background of the city and the ideals and hopes and strivings of the population, their sense of religion and of God, their grasp of the principles of life, their invincible faith and daily witness to it in service, sacrifice and prayer; and then He had a vision of their self-righteousness and formalism, pride and insensibility to knowledge, and their rejection of the new truth; and as the inevitable result, He foresaw the destruction of the city and final ruin of the national life. The sadness, the infinite pity of it, made the hot tears surge into His eyes. His emotion was noticed by the waiting crowd and they watched Him wondering. Those who stood near heard Him murmur:

"Oh Jerusalem! Jerusalem! that kills the prophets of truth, and stones those that are sent to you, how often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings and you would not? If you only knew on what your peace depends! But being blind it is hidden from you. The days are coming when you will be attacked by enemies who will besiege you and utterly destroy you, you and your children, because you would not receive God when He visited you nor believe in the deliverance He would have brought you!"

The solemn words awed His hearers but there was no opportunity for explanation or reflection. He gave the signal to proceed and the procession went on, winding down the slope of the hill to the foot of the valley and then up the short ascent to the eastern gate at the north end of the Temple.

With singing and shouting the multitudes poured into the streets already thronged with pilgrims. The tumult brought the citizens to their doors and roofs.

"Who is He?" some cried, ignorant of what was happening.

"Jesus of Nazareth! Jesus the prophet from Galilee!"

The news that the outlawed reformer was actually in the city spread swiftly; the whole population was startled and agitated; a sense that big events were stirring pervaded all minds. If Jesus, the wonder-worker who could raise the dead, was riding into the city escorted and acclaimed by the passover pilgrims, it could only mean a revolutionary movement and the advent of a new political era. Every one rushed to see the man who might be the long-expected messiah and the King of the Jews.

The religious authorities were staggered: in the face of such a tremendous explosion of public feeling they felt themselves impotent. To arrest Jesus was impossible. "What can we do?" they said helplessly to one another. "Every one is going after Him. He has the whole world at His feet."

Dismounting at the Temple Jesus entered the outer court, the crowd thronging in tumultuously after Him, fully expecting some spectacular act which would crown His miracles and initiate the new Kingdom. The traders and money-changers were preparing to leave for the day, and under His clear, accusing eye they slunk

hurriedly away—He would deal with them on the morrow. Several blind and lame persons were thrust forward, and, never too preoccupied to heal broken lives, He cured them. The crowd would have burst forth in acclamation again but they dared not make a demonstration within the Temple: the boys, however, unaware of the rules forbidding it, or ignoring them, began to sing in their shrill voices:

"Hosanna! Blessed be the son of David."

"Hush! Stop that!" shouted the priests and officers, and going up to Jesus they said indignantly:

"You hear what they are saying?"

"I do," was the calm reply. "Have you never read in the psalms about the children who brought praise to perfection?"

It was enough. He had shown the most arrogant autocrats of the time what was possible: how He could have headed a material movement and swept away their hard-and-fast system of ecclesiastical law and tradition and inaugurated a new national period: how indeed He could have realised their most ambitious dreams and made the Jews the imperial masters of the world.

But it could not be. He aimed at a far larger and finer conquest, the control of the soul of humanity to the end of time, and that could not be won by the methods in which they believed. His Kingdom would not come through material agency, but through what they despised and rejected, the gentle but all-powerful spiritual forces of love and truth.

Through the shadows of the evening He passed, slipping away from the seething crowds, out to the deserted moonlit road of Olivet and over the quiet hill to Bethany—leaving a leaderless multitude suffering from the reaction of exaltation, acutely disappointed

and disillusioned. It was the second chance they had given Him. And such a chance! Why had He not seized it? Was He, after all, a pretender? Was He not strong enough for the task? Had He turned coward at the last?

So they talked and discussed the young prophet of freedom and progress; and the authorities, sensing the waning enthusiasm and divisions of opinion, began a swift counter-propaganda, sending out emissaries to inflame the spirit of disaffection and doubt, and using every means of poisoning the minds of the people against Him.

The forces of conservatism, bigotry and self-interest were converging for their final assault.

V: THE STORY OF THE LAST WEEK

All Palestine having had knowledge of Jesus and a vision of the new Way of Life, and the training of the disciples being finished, the mission of God's evangelist was accomplished. There was no human path of escape from the situation He had created and He knew it, and cheerfully faced the inevitable. The mean forces of self-righteousness, intolerance and hate closed round Him. The story passes on to shameful episodes; the shadows deepen into the dark horror of the death on the cross. . . . Into that lurid atmosphere comes, like the lambent light of heaven into the shades of hell, a mystical Figure, the eternal symbol of Truth, and Calm, and Peace.

STERN ACTION

It was Monday, the fourth day before passover. Through the sweet unsullied beauty of the morning Jesus proceeded to Jerusalem to begin His last intensive campaign. His gaze, always at leisure to notice things, rested on wide ranges of landscape, the grey, jagged wilderness, the misty gorge of the Jordan with a gleam of the Dead Sea, the blue ramparts of Moab, the green slopes of Olivet, and the Holy City rising in splendour and pride on its rocky ridge.

While walking down the road His glance fell on a fig tree covered with foliage; this appeared to Him strange because the fruit-buds always appeared before the leaves and the ripe figs were not gathered until later in the year. He left the path to observe it more

closely, His disciples following to find what had attracted His attention. When they saw Him go up to the tree they imagined He was hungry and wished to eat the fruit. He examined it.

"No fruit," He said, "not even green fruit."

Thoughtfully He stood and regarded it. To His mind, quick to detect analogies in nature, it became a symbol. Apparently healthy it was exhibiting nothing but leafage: it was functioning but producing nothing: it was a hypocrite. Such was Judaism; seemingly alive and vigorous but barren of spiritual result, ostentatious and showy but lacking in the fruit of love and freedom and progress.

He was uttering His thoughts aloud:

"A religion which condemns itself . . . formal and false . . . no one can ever find satisfaction in it as no one will ever eat of this tree."

The disciples heard the words but did not understand: they imagined that He was "cursing" the tree, for cursing was a common habit and they themselves had been addicted to it: if He had been disappointed at not finding fruit it was natural to them that He should express His feelings in this way.

They went on to the city and Jesus made at once for the Temple. The outer court was swarming with pilgrims and as noisy as a market, the shouts and chaffering of the traders and money-changers, the clamour of a score of dialects and tongues mingling with the cries of the sacrificial stock. With infinite sorrow He watched the scene, seeing much more than was apparent on the surface: He saw the greed and dishonesty mixed up with the transactions, and in the background the avaricious High Priests drawing much of their wealth from the necessities of the simple pilgrims, trading on their ignorance and piety, imposing

a multitude of exacting rules and requirements upon them regarding food, clothes and daily habits, and receiving the penalties incurred for their violation. His sorrow turned to a pure passion of anger, and the purpose that had long been in His heart resolved itself into action.

Bending down He picked up a few pieces of discarded cordage and twisted them into the form of a whip. With this symbol of a scourge He advanced into the midst of the throng and began to drive the animals out of the court. The dealers gazed in astonishment at the tall, active stranger taking liberties with their property and shouted in remonstrance.

He turned towards them, His eyes flashing, his mien stern and authoritative, and they shrank back in dismay, for only one man could possess that look and air of distinction.

"Jesus!" they whispered, and shaking with superstitious fear they hastily shepherded the bullocks, lambs and sheep out of the building.

He turned to the bird-sellers with the same commanding look.

"Away with these!" He cried; "make not my Father's house a house of merchandise."

He passed to the money-brokers who, when they saw Him bearing down upon them with an expression of concentrated purpose and strength, sat as if paralysed. He tipped over their tables and the money went jingling over the marble pavement.

"Is it not written in your scriptures that my Father's Temple shall be called a house of prayer for every nation? You are making it a den of robbers!"

They fled as before a storm.

The pilgrims viewed His attack with unconcealed satisfaction. They knew only too well how they were

taken advantage of by those who sold them what they needed, and how through the dishonest traffic the High Priests were enriched. Once again their feelings rose in favour of this intrepid reformer. The Temple police gathered in force and glanced apprehensively up to the Tower of Antonia where the Roman guard, curious and alert, were watching the scene, but they found themselves in a hostile atmosphere and quietly withdrew. . . .

Next morning, Tuesday, on their way to the city the eyes of the disciples turned idly towards the fig tree which had interested Jesus and involuntarily they cried out in surprise. The leaves were dry and shrivelled as if blasted by heat. Peter, a man not unaccustomed to strong language, said:

"Teacher, look! the fig tree which you cursed yesterday has withered away!"

"I did not curse it, Peter. I acted a parable for you. Do you not perceive it? Even as this splendid fig tree has died so the Jewish Kingdom will die because it has proved false to its nature and opportunities, and instead of developing a rich spiritual life has produced nothing but pretentious ceremonial."

But the disciples were more interested in what they termed the miracle than what it was intended to teach.

"How did it wither?" they asked with shallow curiosity.

"How? Have I not already told you what faith can do? Again I say if you believe and do not doubt you will not only be able to do what has been done to the fig tree, but—" He pointed to Mount Olivet above them—"even if you say to this hill 'throw yourself into the sea' it will be done. Faith can remove mountains of difficulty and opposition: Faith can work miracles of achievement. . . ."

He saw that they understood: they were beginning to read between the lines of His most startling statements.

"Further," He went on, "if two of you agree on anything and pray for it, it will be done for you by my Father. Wherever there are two they are not without God, and where there is one alone I am with him. Raise the stone and there you will find me; cleave the wood and there I am. Remember therefore that wherever two or three are gathered together in my name there will I be in the midst of them."

When He reached the Temple He began quietly to teach after the morning service was over, but was immediately confronted by a delegation from the Sanhedrin who had been on the outlook for Him. He observed that the majority were sadducees, which indicated that the most powerful element in the Council was now actively opposing Him. Their vested privileges, their monetary interests were being attacked. His right to teach in the sanctuary therefore was to be contested. The general body of worshippers closed in about them.

"By what authority are you acting in this way within the Temple?" He was brusquely asked. "Who gave you the power to set up as a teacher of new doctrine?"

He faced them with calm assurance.

"I will ask you a question, and if you answer it I will tell you by what authority I speak and act—the revival of John, was it of God or of man?"

A simple question but one which went to the heart of things. For a moment the answer seemed easy: then it dawned on them that it was not so easy as it seemed. With lowered voices they discussed it among themselves.

"Suppose we say it was 'of God,' He will ask why

we did not believe John. On the other hand, if we say 'of man' the people will condemn us; these ignorant Galileans may even stone us, for they believe that John was a prophet and a martyr."

They turned sullenly to Jesus who was waiting with a grave smile for their reply.

"We do not know," they said evasively.

"Then I do not tell you on whose authority I am acting. It would affect you as little as you were affected by a knowledge of John's authority."

Baffled along this line of approach they assumed a conciliatory attitude.

"At least show us a sign that your authority is genuine."

A sign! They were always demanding a sign, something that would gratify their love of the marvellous; how could He demonstrate, more than He had done, the Divine power He possessed, and how could He give a vision of the development of His Kingdom which would be the most wonderful sign of all? He looked around on the structural magnificence of the Temple of which they were so proud, but which in His eyes was merely an ephemeral mass of stone and wood that could be razed to the ground in a day, and thought of His spiritual Kingdom, not built with hands of earthly material, but of the intangible elements of love and service that would last for ever.

"This great sanctuary which you reverence," He said, "will be destroyed, but I will raise up a greater in its place."

They shot incredulous glances at Him.

"This Temple which has taken forty-six years to build and is not finished yet! And you say you will replace it! Assuredly you are mad!"

His expression grew stern and His glance swept

round the entire assemblage—the sinister group of officials in front, the bodies of citizens with looks of cool detachment, the wide encircling mass of pilgrims keenly interested and openly admiring His courage.

"Listen. A man had two sons. To the first he said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard to-day.' 'I will not,' he replied, but afterwards changed his mind and went. The same request was made to the second who replied, 'I will' but did not do so. Which of the two, think you, did the will of his father?"

"The first," was the quick response.

"So," came the scathing comment, "the publicans and the harlots who repent go into the Kingdom of God before you, who profess to obey God and do not."

A slow flush of wrath darkened the faces of the officials.

"Listen"—again that terrible challenging voice which compelled their attention. In a swift, short parable He pictured their religious history:

"A man planted a vineyard, equipped it, and let it to husbandmen and then left them to their own devices. In due time he sent a servant to collect the produce but they seized and beat him and sent him away empty-handed. He sent another, and him they insulted and knocked on the head. He sent a third whom they killed outright. Many others he sent; some were flogged and some were murdered. At last he said, 'What can I do? I will send my beloved son; they will surely respect him.' But they said, 'Here is the heir, let us kill him and the property will be ours!' So they took and killed him. What, think you, will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and destroy these men and give the vineyard to others."

A tense silence followed; it was broken by a fervent exclamation:

"God forbid!"

The parable had gone home. Accustomed to thought clothed in figurative language there was not one of the delegation who did not realise its meaning. It referred to them; He was accusing them, as religious leaders, of abusing their position and killing the pioneers of truth, of preventing progress and enlightenment and liberty.

The accusation filled them with uncontrollable rage. There and then they attempted to seize Him, but a threatening shout from the crowd behind made them desist and looking round they saw scores of menacing faces which made them wince more than the sting of the prophet's tongue. They melted away.

A SCATHING DENUNCIATION

In the chamber where the Council was sitting in secret session they made their report:

"It is clear that we cannot arrest Him just now. We have really nothing tangible to bring against Him."

"Then," said one, "we must procure it."

"Get Him to convict Himself," said Annas. "Goad Him into saying something which will bring Him within the power of the civil authorities."

"We have tried that before."

"Let us do it again; let us adopt guile."

So they plotted. Selecting some of the cleverest students in their schools, who would be unknown to Jesus, they ordered them to approach Him as simple and anxious enquirers, and with these they associated a number of the Herodian party, favourable to the Romans, to be witnesses.

With affected humility the students came to Jesus and asked Him earnestly:

"Teacher, we know you are a true exponent of the truth and are showing us the way of God. We also know that you are fearless and care nothing for men. Now there is something which troubles us, and you, knowing all things, we ask to decide for us. Is it lawful to pay taxes to Cæsar? Shall we pay tribute to him or shall we not?"

His keen spiritual insight pierced their flimsy subterfuge.

"You hypocrites! bring me a denarius."

The little silver coin was brought and handed to Him.

He turned it over in His hand, looked at the head it bore encircled by laurel, and read the legend round it:

"Tiberius Cæsar Divi Augusti filius Augustus Imperator."

"Whose image is this and whose is this inscription?"

"Cæsar's."

"Then," handing it back, "render to Cæsar what belongs to Cæsar and to God what belongs to God."

Their faces were pictures of blank astonishment. The reply was so simple, so sagacious, so innocuous; there was absolutely nothing which they could twist to serve their purpose. They retreated in silent discomfiture and reported their non-success to the Council.

The sadducees smiled and stroked their beards and thought. With all their will the pharisees were not astute enough for this clever young Galilean. They would show how He could be cornered. Putting their heads together they concocted a question and then went into the court and approached Jesus.

"Teacher," they said casually when an opportunity came, "Moses tells us that if any one dies without issue his brother is to marry the widow. Now we know of

seven brothers; the first died and as he left no children the second brother married his widow; he died also without children and the third married her and had none; and so on until the last died; and then the woman also died. What puzzles us is whose wife will she be at the resurrection, seeing all seven had her?"

"You ask this," He replied, "because you are ignorant; you know neither your scriptures nor the purpose of God. Marriage is necessary in this world to ensure the continuity of life, but in the spiritual world where there is no death there is no need for marriage; people are spiritual beings. But why ask me this? Are you not sadducees who profess to disbelieve in the resurrection because there is nothing about it in the canon? Have you not read how God is represented as speaking to Moses like this, 'I am the God of Abraham and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob?' And that is true, for God is not the God of the dead but of the living. You are greatly in error in your belief."

Beaten at their own game the sadducees backed out amidst the ironical cries of the crowd. Once more the pharisees returned to the charge; they put forward one of the ablest scribes, who began with a leading question:

"Teacher, what is the fundamental command of the law; I mean the first and greatest?"

"Do you not know? Do you not say it every day? Is it not written in those phylacteries you are wearing?" Jesus asked as if surprised. "I will repeat it—*'Hear, oh Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord, and you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, and soul, and mind, and strength.'* There is another—*'You must love your neighbour as yourself.'* There are no other commandments greater than these."

His interrogator was impressed in spite of himself.

"You are right," he said soberly. "To love God and our neighbours is better than to offer sacrifice."

Jesus looked at him searchingly and saw that he was sincere.

"You are not far from the Kingdom of God," He said quietly, adding, "Every scribe who knows the truths of the Kingdom is like a householder who can bring out of his treasures things new as well as old."

He turned to the pharisees around.

"Now, I wish to ask you a question. What do you think of the messiah whom you expect—whose son will he be?"

"The son of David," was the prompt reply.

"How is that? Is not David represented in your book of psalms as saying 'The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet?' If David called him Lord how can he be his son? David's Lord and David's son—he cannot be both."

They were silent. Out of their own scriptures He had confounded them, showing not only how easy it was to find barren dialectic matter in these but also how low a view they took of their messiah who was to be only the blood descendant of an earthly monarch.

There was no further attempt to trip Him in His talk; He had proved Himself unassailable. As they were done with Him so He was done with them. Nothing could move their hearts; they were insensitive to all appeals; they were too selfishly bound up with the existing system of ideas and practices to care for change, and especially change in the direction of purer and higher ideals. He did not care now what He said to them. The only way to pierce their armour of self-righteousness was simply to tell them the truth about

themselves, and His last word to them was a calm, deliberate judgment of their character which was terrific in its power and deadly in its effect. Once before in Peræa He had attacked men of the same character, and again He adopted a similar line, using almost the same words but with a more comprehensive, authoritative and final condemnation.

To the disciples and people first He said:

"The scribes and the pharisees sit in the seat of authority and make the decisions which you are bound to obey; but do not do what they do, for they talk and do not act. They create heavy burdens and place them on your shoulders, but they themselves will not stir a finger to help you or to remove them. For all they do is done that they may be seen of men. They wear large phylacteries and tassels and take the chief place at banquets and the front seats in the synagogues and love to be saluted in the streets and markets and to be called 'rabbi'; they enrich themselves at the cost of the widows for whom they ought to care; and they hide their real nature under a pretence of piety and the utterance of long prayers. Great will be their condemnation. I say to you all that he that is greatest should be as a servant. Whoever exalts himself will be abased and whoever humbles himself will be exalted."

He turned directly to the frowning group whom He was denouncing:

"Woe to you, scribes! Hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of light and truth against men by your rules and regulations; you will not enter yourselves, nor will you suffer those who desire to go in to enter.

"Woe to you, pharisees! Hypocrites! You will go any length to make one proselyte, and when you succeed you make him twice as hard and formal as yourselves.

"Woe to you, scribes! Hypocrites! You say that whoever swears an oath by the Temple it means nothing; but whoever swears by the gold upon it the oath is binding. How foolish! Which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies it? So also you say whoever swears by the altar it is nothing, but whoever swears by the gift upon it the oath is binding. Blind! Which is greater, the gift or the altar which hallows it? He who swears by the altar swears by it and all upon it; he who swears by the Temple swears by it and by Him who dwells in it; he who swears by the heavens swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits upon it? You blind guides who strain out a gnat and yet swallow a camel!"

The familiar proverb thus applied raised a smile and here and there a laugh among the people which served to swell the wrath of their leaders.

But Jesus was not done. Like the clean blows of a hammer on iron came His final words:

"Woe to you, scribes and pharisees! Hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and plate but inside you are full of ambition, pride, avarice and self-indulgence. Blind! If you cleanse the inside the outside will be clean.

"Woe to you, for you are like sepulchres which have been white-washed; they look well but within they are full of dead men's bones and uncleanness; so you outwardly appear good but within you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.

"Woe to you, for you build tombs for the prophets and garnish those of the righteous, and say 'if *we* had lived in the days of our fathers *we* would not have joined them in killing the prophets'; so you acknowledge you are the sons of those who murdered the

prophets! And you are going to fill up the measure of your fathers and complete their work! You serpents, you brood of vipers! How can you escape judgment and sentence?"

They were literally cowering now beneath the scorn and irony: so scathing and scarifying were the words that they seemed dazzled and blinded: it was as if lightning had shocked and numbed their minds. Black and speechless with rage they slunk away with murder in their hearts.

Jesus made no further effort to teach. With His disciples He took a farewell walk round the Temple, lingering here and there, watching the people, speaking kind words to some, saluting others. For a little He sat on the steps of the Court of the Women, noting the stream of people depositing offerings in the trumpets arranged along the colonnade, money gifts in place of sacrifices, and freewill offerings for incense, decorations and lights, large amounts and small, in gold and silver and copper. One needy-looking woman who, although seemingly poor, was clean and tidy in her attire, crept up humbly and dropped in two mites, the smallest Jewish coin, the eightieth part of a denarius, and passed on with a look of content. Jesus beckoned to His disciples who had been moving about the Court.

"Do you see that woman?" He said, pointing her out. "Her offering was only two mites, but she has in reality given more than all the others together, for they have offered only of their superfluous wealth, whereas she has given all that she possessed in the world, her entire living."

Passing at last out of the Courts they encountered near the principal entrance a group of strangers, Greeks, evidently proselytes come to take part in the

festival. One detached himself and came forward and accosted Philip. The disciple recognised him and they saluted.

"Sir," the man said, "we would see Jesus."

Philip called Andrew aside and introduced the man, and both led the party up to Jesus who received them kindly. His face, pale and sad after the strain He had been undergoing, lit up when He heard that they were representatives of the Grecian race. Such a meeting after the final break with the Jews and at the end of His ministry was symbolical: the "chosen people" had rejected Him but the great pagan world was seeking Him and would eventually acknowledge His sovereignty.

He turned to His disciples:

"The hour has come when the Son of Man is to be glorified. A great law of life is sacrifice. Except a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies it remains by itself a single grain, but if it dies it grows and bears much fruit. So he that loves his life loses it and he who does not care for his life in this world will keep it always. Therefore," He said, speaking more directly to the Greeks, "if any man enter my service let him follow me and walk in the path of love and service, so that he may come to where I am and be honoured by my Father."

They moved on. The open gateway of the Temple loomed before them. For a moment the sense that this was His final departure from the Temple and a swift vision of what was before Him overcame Him and He paused:

"Now is my soul troubled and what can I say? Father, save me from this hour."

An inrush of confidence brought a reaction:

"No, for it is for my Father's cause that I have come to this hour. Father, rather glorify thy name!"

Instantly, as if from a listening Power in the spiritual sphere, came a response which the disciples heard and understood:

"I have glorified it and will glorify it again."

Some in the crowd imagined that it thundered; others declared that it must be some heavenly voice. To His disciples Jesus said:

"The voice did not come for my sake but for yours. Now the evil of the world will be cast out, for when I have ascended to my Father I will draw all men to me."

Murmurs broke from the crowd: "We have heard it said that our messiah is to live for ever. Now you say the Son of Man is to ascend to heaven. Who is this Son of Man?"

He did not answer the question which had been asked with such wearisome reiteration. What was the use? Instead He said a few kind farewell words:

"The Light is only to be with you a little while. While you have it walk in it, for he who walks in darkness does not know where he goes. Believe in it that you may be the children of Light."

With His disciples He took the road to Bethany. Behind He left a populace largely unimpressed despite His teaching and the "signs" He had performed. Yet there were not a few who believed in Him, even among the chief men in ecclesiastical circles; but these were secret disciples, for official hostility was so strong that they were afraid of being excommunicated if they openly admitted their faith. They preferred honour from men rather than honour from God.

SUNSET ON OLIVET

Ascending the slopes of Olivet they came abreast of the Temple now bathed in the light of the setting sun. Its massive grace impressed the disciples anew.

"Teacher!" they exclaimed, "what a wonderful building it is; what tremendous blocks of stone, what costly decorations!"

Jesus paused and gazed across towards the gilded domes and towers silhouetted against the sunset splendour.

"True," He said musingly, "yet that great structure so strong and beautiful will soon be in ruins; there is not a stone that will not be thrown down."

He spoke as if to Himself and they forbore to question Him. But at the summit where He rested, Peter, John, James and Andrew took courage and asked Him what He meant and when that cataclysm He predicted would occur. Their thoughts were still coloured by that pictorial, apocalyptic literature which was so popular.

"Take care," He said, "that you are not deceived about these things. Many will appear in my name and try to delude the people with all kinds of doctrine, but do not heed them. The growth of the Kingdom will be slow and much will happen ere the end. Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom and famines and earthquakes and pestilences will occur. My disciples will not be exempt from sorrows. They will be persecuted and beaten and imprisoned, they will be hated by men of every race and be martyred. Strange and sad things will be seen. Fathers will betray and destroy their sons, and sons their fathers, brothers their brothers, and friends their friends, and all in the name of religion and for my sake! False

teachers will arise, outwardly as harmless as sheep, but inwardly ravenous wolves whose conduct will reveal their character. Iniquity will abound and love for me will wax cold, but they who endure will receive their reward. The good tidings of God will be made known in time to all the world. When you see a fig tree and other trees begin to show their buds you know that summer is coming. So when you see the green shoots of love and faith and service over all the earth you will know that the Kingdom of God is nigh. It will come. I tell you the heavens and the earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away."

So He proclaimed to these few simple men the eternal vitality and immutability of truth. They looked at Him so earnestly, trying to comprehend what He was saying, that He was moved with a feeling of pity.

"You yourselves will have your share of trouble but by patient endurance you will overcome. You will be harried and persecuted. When you are arrested and placed on trial do not worry about your defence for I will teach you what to say and you will say it in a way your adversaries will not be able to refute.

"But take heed lest at any time your hearts be overcome by temptation and you give way to self-indulgence and worldly anxiety and care. For the doom of men always comes unexpectedly and suddenly. They eat and drink and marry and sleep and then are cut off as the people were in the story of the great flood told in the scriptures. Watch you therefore lest you also be found asleep when the call comes.

"Listen: at a marriage there were ten maidens who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom and the bride as they came to their future home. Five of them, who were wise, saw that there was oil in their

lamps: the other five, who were foolish, neglected to look and had none. On the way they waited for the procession, but as it was long in coming they grew drowsy and all slumbered and slept. Suddenly at midnight they were awakened by the cry, 'The bridegroom is coming! go out and meet him.' They all arose and trimmed their lamps, but the foolish maidens found to their dismay that they had no oil. 'Give us some of yours,' they begged their wiser companions, but these replied, 'We cannot: there would not be enough for us. Go to the oil-dealers and buy some.' They hurried off, and while they were away the procession arrived; the wise maidens accompanied it to the house and went in to the banquet and the door was closed. When the others arrived they knocked and cried, 'Sir, open the door to us and let us in!' but the reply was, 'I do not know you.' So I say to you, watch!

"And pray always that you may be accounted worthy to gain life eternal. You are in a special position—like the servants in a story I will tell you. A certain man who was going abroad called his servants together: to one he gave £1,200: to another £480, and to the third £240, in proportion to their worth. He then departed. The first and second traded with their money and doubled the amounts, but the third went and dug a hole and hid his. When their master returned he settled accounts with them and the first said: 'You gave me £1,200; I have gained other £1,200 with it.' 'Well done,' replied his master. 'You are a good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in a small thing, I will give you charge of larger matters. Come and dine with me.' The second servant was similarly praised and invited. Then the third came forward and said: 'I knew you were a hard, money-making Jew, reaping where you never sowed and gathering where

you never winnowed. As I was afraid I might lose your money I hid it in the earth. There it is as you gave it to me.'

"The master regarded him sternly. 'You wicked and lazy servant! Could you not at least have placed the money in the bank and obtained interest? I will give it to the one who has the £1,200 and you will be thrown out into the darkness; for to every one in the Kingdom who has of good, will more be added; and he who has not will lose even the little he has.' "

Thus He taught them the law of spiritual growth and attainment and the sure decay of natures which make no use of their advantages. Men do not stand still; they either go forward to the light or sink back into the darkness.

All sat silent, busy with the thoughts His words had induced. Over the landscape the shadows fell and the silence deepened and the moon rose and irradiated and etherealised the city. They saw Jesus gazing upon the buildings and watched His face grow strangely sad and wistful and a far-away expression come into it as if His mind was dwelling upon remoter scenes.

As they waited they could not help thinking of the wonderful history of the capital, its magnificence and pride and of the centuries of human passions that had raged in it: of the mingled evil and good: the endless striving after righteousness and peace and the endless mistakes and failures and foolishness; all so typical of the larger world itself. What was the meaning of it all?

So they mused, and as if in answer to their unspoken thoughts they heard Jesus say:

"I will show you a picture, a vision, which will help you to understand. It is that of the end of all things, when the Son of Man will sit on His throne of glory

and all nations will be gathered before Him. He will separate them as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats. To those on the right He will say:

" 'Come, happy ones, and enjoy the Kingdom of my Father. For I was hungry and you fed me; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you took me into your house; I was naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you visited me; I was in prison and you came to me.'

"Then these disciples will say in surprise, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and fed you, or thirsty and gave you drink, or a stranger and was kind to you, or naked and clothed you, or ill or in prison and visited you?'

"The King will answer:

" 'I say to you that inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers you did it to me.'

"Then to the host on the left hand He will say:

" 'Depart from me, you evil ones, into eternal darkness, for I was hungry and you did not feed me; I was thirsty and you gave me no drink; I was a stranger and you were not kind to me; naked and you did not clothe me; sick and in prison and you never visited me.'

"They will protest and answer: 'Lord, when did we ever see you hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or unclothed, or ill, or in prison, and did not minister to you?'

"And the reply will be: 'Inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of those in need you did not do it to me.'

"So these will go into the darkness but the good into life eternal."

He rose, and they followed Him as if in a dream for they were dazzled by the scene He had brought so vividly before them; it seemed pictorially to sum up all

His teaching; to contain the whole of Truth; to be ineffably Divine in its splendid simplicity.

THE TRAITOR

Exasperated to the point of desperation the authorities resolved to make an end of Jesus. An informal meeting was held on Wednesday in the palace of Caiaphas, the chief priests, scribes, and elders being present, as well as officers of the Temple guard. The matter was vigorously and often violently discussed, the sadducees insisting on an immediate arrest, by open force or by guile, others still urging caution in view of the attitude of the people, for as long as the Galilean pilgrims were in the city there was risk of a tumult and consequent intervention by the Roman power.

While the debate was proceeding an officer of the guard entered and made a whispered communication to Caiaphas who looked up sharply with an expression of surprise. He nodded and the officer retired. Caiaphas held up a hand for silence, a slow, gratified smile on his face.

Into the room, preceded by the officer, walked a young man, self-conscious and defiant, and was placed at the side of the President who turned his deep-set eyes upon him and studied him for a moment. Then he said softly:

"You are Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve disciples of Jesus of Nazareth?"

"I am."

"What is your object in coming to us?"

"To assist you in securing the Teacher."

"Ah!"

Judas heard the intakes of breath and the stifled exclamations. Were they expressions of satisfaction

or of wonder? He felt rather than saw that many faces were craning forward and scrutinising him curiously: he seemed to hear as from a remote distance the word "traitor."

"Very good," said Caiaphas, his crafty eyes gleaming. "What do you propose?"

"That you should take Him secretly when He is with His disciples."

"That is our intention: He must be taken by surprise."

"Then I shall inform you of the best occasion. He is spending to-day at Bethany. You will have a force ready?"

"Sufficient for the purpose . . . And your price?" It was inconceivable to an oriental mind that such a betrayal could be schemed from other than mercenary motives.

Judas mentioned a large sum and eventually a bargain was struck.

He passed out in complete silence, every eye regarding him with the same intent scrutiny: it was neither a hostile nor a friendly look, but simply one of curiosity, interest, wonder shot with a little contempt, for, after all, he was betraying in cold blood the man who was his friend and teacher.

He rejoined his comrades at Bethany, slinking in amongst them with the air of having been attending to matters under his charge.

Jesus read him like an open book and He made His own plans. His thoughts were now entirely for the eleven for whom He felt profound solicitude and sorrow. They had left all and cast in their lot with His: despite their ignorance and blindness they were true-hearted and loyal men, and upon them everything depended in the future. He knew the trial to which they

were about to be subjected, more terrible than they imagined, and He longed and desired to strengthen them beforehand, to knit them to Him, to give them a last hour or two of intimate and loving fellowship, to leave them a tender and gracious memory which would fortify them in the dark days to come.

He sent for one of His city followers, whose son, Mark, was also a disciple. They lived in a large house with an inner court, the arched entrance to which was protected by a strong gate. With this man He made an arrangement unknown to any of the Twelve.

When Thursday came and no indication was given by Jesus how He intended to celebrate the festival on the following evening, His disciples began to wonder whether He meant to take part in it. Many things had to be thought of and done, and it was necessary to begin the work of preparation. They came to Him at last.

"Teacher, where do you wish us to go and prepare the passover for you?"

The ears of Judas were keen for the answer, for it would be a simple matter to seize Him in a private house in the city and convey Him secretly to prison.

Jesus turned tranquilly to Peter and John.

"You two go and make ready for us."

"Yes, Teacher—but where?"

Judas edged nearer. The Master was playing into his hands.

"Go to the city by the eastern gate, walk up the street, and there you will see a man carrying a pitcher of water . . ."

"A man, Teacher?" they echoed in surprise, for the carrying of water was the work of women.

"A man," He repeated smiling. "Follow him and when he enters a house go in after him. Find the

owner and say, 'The Teacher says the time has come. He wishes to know where the guest chamber is in which He is to celebrate the passover with His disciples.' He will show you a large upper-room already arranged. There make ready for us. I and the others will wait here."

Disappointment, mortification and anger mingled in the expression of Judas. He had been out-manœuvred. Now he was sure that Jesus was aware of his intention. He felt the silent challenge in His action, and being neither ashamed nor afraid he determined grimly that if there were to be a clash of wits he would win. So little did he know the character and purpose of Jesus.

The two disciples went off to Jerusalem, where on entering the street inside the valley gate they saw a domestic slave lounging with a jar of water by his side. As soon as he noticed them he lifted the jar and walked slowly forward and they followed. After threading a number of streets he stopped at the entrance to a massive-looking house and knocked at the small wicket door in the gate. A woman appeared and at once admitted them. They found the owner and repeated the question they had been instructed to ask and he took them up to a tower and showed them a spacious room. It was richly carpeted; in the centre were low tables forming three sides of a square, with separate couches and cushions ranged along the outside, and in a recess stood a jar of water, basin and towel.

The two men made some necessary, simple preparations, and in the afternoon returned to Bethany and reported to Jesus.

"It is well," He said: "Let us go to-night."

It was their last walk over Mount Olivet. At the

summit they saw the city buildings traced in black outline against the afterglow. Ere they reached the bridge in the valley the colour had deepened to a fiery red which passed swiftly into purple, not a clear purple, but hot, sombre and menacing.

A LAST MEAL

In the cool of the early twilight they entered the court, still fragrant with the accumulated scents of the day, and ascended to the upper-room. The disciples saw that the table appointments and food were those for an ordinary supper such as they usually had together. Why they had come to the city for this they did not know; they were not surprised now at anything which Jesus did, knowing that He was always absolutely right. They had broken unreservedly from the past and were facing new and higher conceptions of religion and life.

All except one—Judas. As a Judean he retained his sense of strict obedience to the outward forms of religion, and he had an idea that Jesus intended this to be a passover meal. If so it was illegal; it was the night previous to the fixed date and there was no sacrificial lamb—that was always killed on the following day. He experienced a feeling of resentment at what seemed to be a violation of hallowed tradition, and it fortified his resolution to hand Jesus over to the authorities.

The disciples began to discuss where they would sit and were disputing each other's right to the posts of honour when Jesus intervened. John He placed at the end of one of the tables. Peter He directed to go to the other. He indicated His own place next to and behind John, or second from the end, and with a love,

Divine in its forgiving forbearance, He honoured Judas by allotting him the seat on His other side or behind Him. The rest were soon settled and then He spoke gently but pointedly:

"I have already told you that in my Kingdom he that is great must become as the least and he that is chief must be as one that serves. Who is the greater —the one who sits at meat or the one who serves? Is it not the one who sits at meat? Yet though I am with you as Lord and Master I am as one who serves."

He threw aside His outer robe and took the towel, which He fastened to His tunic like an apron, poured water into the basin, and kneeling before John washed his feet and wiped them dry with the towel. Then He passed to Judas and did the same and so round the table. Finally He reached Peter:

"Lord," said Peter, "you are not going to wash *my* feet?"

"Yes, Peter. You do not understand why now, but you will by and by," and He knelt before him.

Distressed to see his Master in so humble a position Peter drew away his feet, crying:

"You will never wash my feet!"

"Peter! If I do not wash your feet you will not share my lot."

Peter swung round impulsively to the opposite extreme:

"Lord! not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!"

Jesus smiled at His impetuous follower and reminded him of the custom of the priests in the Temple who, bathing once in the morning, were not required to wash again that day except their hands and feet.

"He that is bathed," he said, "does not need to wash again except his feet."

His face shadowed. "Yes, you are clean—but not all of you—not all."

He put away the towel and basin, resumed His robe, and sat down.

"Do you know the meaning of what I have done?" He continued. "You call me Master and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet you ought to wash one another's feet. I have set you an example."

As they began to eat they saw the shadow deepen on His face. He appeared to be troubled in mind and they watched Him with a silent, sympathetic interest.

"Not all of you," He went on sadly, repeating His words. . . . "One of you shall betray me . . . one" —reproachfully—"who is eating with me."

In pained astonishment the disciples looked at each other. What did He mean? To betray a guest was the basest act of treachery and universally execrated: surely He did not imply that one of themselves was going to deliver Him over to His enemies? And yet . . .

They regarded Him closely endeavouring to read His thoughts. His words were explicit enough. A vague feeling of distrust seized them. One of His own inner circle! They glanced suspiciously, fearfully, at one another.

"Lord!" one exclaimed, "not I?" and all finding voice echoed, "Not I, Lord?"

Judas spoke last. "Not I, is it, Rabbi?" he asked brazenly.

"Is it not?" murmured Jesus in a low voice which had a note of appeal in it as if He would even yet draw back the traitor from the precipice.

From the opposite table Peter signalled to John and leaning over spoke to him.

"Get Him to tell you who it is."

John turned and whispered:

"Lord, who is it?"

It was a relief to Jesus to share His secret with the disciple whom above all others He loved.

"He to whom I will give this piece of bread after I have dipped it."

Lifting up a morsel He placed it in the sauce and then handed it to Judas. It was the custom for a host thus to honour the chief guest. Jesus was acting out His own teaching, as He always did. He was loving Judas to the end. But it was the end. He realised that there was nothing more to be done.

He spoke quietly and naturally:

"What you are going to do, do quickly."

Judas started. So Jesus knew not only of his intention but acquiesced in it! Well, it proved that his own estimate of the situation had been right. Jesus would be killed in any case, though He was a fool to allow it, and as His immediate disciples would also be arrested he himself had done well to make his peace with the authorities.

He looked furtively around but the others had not taken in the meaning of Jesus. Some imagined that He had given Judas a direction to make purchases for the regular passover feast next day; others that He had asked him to give something to the poor.

Grimly and silently the traitor rose and went out into the night.

With his going the atmosphere lightened: it seemed as if some alien evil influence had been removed. Jesus became calm and cheerful again.

"You know," He said, "that Israel is likened to the vine, but I am the true vine and my Father the vine-dresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit He cuts off"—was He thinking of Judas?—"and every branch that bears fruit He prunes and cleans that it may bear more fruit. You are branches and are clean through the teaching I have given you. Continue therefore to live in me as I live in you. A branch cannot bear fruit unless it is part of the vine; neither can you unless you continue in me. Apart from me you can achieve nothing. If a man does not live in me he becomes withered and will be cast away and burned. But if he lives in me and has constant fellowship with me his prayers will be answered, his life will be full and rich, and he will bear much fruit, and so will my Father be glorified."

As the meal proceeded the disciples talked quietly amongst themselves of the festival on the morrow, of the slaughter of the multitude of lambs, the sprinkling of their blood on the altar, and of what these and other incidents denoted under that old covenant or compact which the race had made with God and which now seemed to them to be losing its significance and its value under the influence and teaching of Jesus.

Jesus, listening, seized the opportunity their remarks afforded Him. Suddenly He took up the bread lying on the table, uttered a few words of thanksgiving, broke it, and handed a piece to each saying:

"Take it: this signifies *my* body."

Then He lifted the cup of wine—and after another word of thanks handed it round saying:

"This symbolises *my* blood soon to be shed; it will ratify a new and higher covenant."

They all drank in silence, pondering the strangely

vivid imagery which brought the actuality of the impending tragedy so clearly to their minds. It was an allegorical illustration which they could not misunderstand. As they tried to follow further the line of His thought so persistently related to the sacrifice of Himself a chill sense of dejection fell upon them.

When the meal was over and they were relaxed Jesus again fixed their attention, speaking to them in an intimate and affectionate way:

"Children, I have longed greatly to have this last meal with you before I suffer. For the end has come. I will be with you now only for a little while longer. As I told the Jews, where I go you cannot come. But I will not leave you desolate; because I live you will live also. And I will ask the Father and He will give you another comforter, the Spirit of Truth, of whom the world knows nothing, for it is blind concerning Him; He will teach you and bring to your remembrance all that has been said to you. I have told you ere it comes to pass so that when it does come you may believe."

All were leaning forward now, hanging upon His words, feeling the mystery in them, but tranquillised by their gracious kindliness.

"Even as the Father has loved me so I have loved you. Keep my commandments so that you may continue in my love even as I keep my Father's commandments and continue in His love. All who love me will be loved by my Father. Greater love has no man than this—that he will lay down his life for his friends. You are *my* friends if you do the things that I ask of you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master does. I have told you all that I have heard from my Father, but I want to give you a new commandment. I command you to love

one another as I love you. By this all men will know that you are my disciples. And so I will reveal myself to you."

As He paused Thaddeus said:

"Lord, how is it that you will reveal yourself to us and not to the world?"

"The revelation I speak of is an inward, a spiritual illumination, for if a man loves me, my Father and I will love him and dwell in him."

Peter involuntarily blurted out the question in each heart.

"Lord, where are you going?"

"Where you cannot follow me now but you will do so later."

"But why, Lord, cannot I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you."

"You will lay down your life for me?" echoed Jesus with a sad half-smile. "Ah, Peter, I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail, but you too will be sifted like wheat. Nevertheless when all is over be a strength to the others."

"Lord," he protested, "I am ready to go with you even to prison and to death."

"Not only you, Peter, but all of you will be offended because of me this night."

Peter was deeply hurt: the Master was making him out to be a faithless disciple and a coward. Confidently he cried:

"Although all shall be offended because of you yet I will never be offended."

"Peter! This very night the cock will not crow ere you have thrice denied that you know me!"

Deny all knowledge of his beloved Lord and Master before the dawn! It was incredible! Peter rose in his excitement. Vehemently he cried:

"Lord, though I shall have to die with you I will never deny you!"

"Neither will I," said John, and so said they all.

There was no use in combating their self-confidence: Jesus changed the subject.

"When I sent you out on your mission of evangelism did you want for anything?"

"Nothing."

"Now it will be different: you will need to provide yourselves with money and a purse and other things—even," He added smiling, "a sword—for you are going into battle."

"Lord," they said eagerly, "we have two swords amongst us!"

"Enough," He replied with a gesture of impatience: He had not intended His words to be taken literally.

"Remember," He went on, "you will have trials. They will turn you out of their churches. The time, indeed, will come when they who kill you will think they are doing a service to God, not knowing God nor me. But if the world hate you, remember that it hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world it would love you because you would belong to it, but because you are not, because I chose you out of it, it will hate you. Remember, a servant is not greater than his master; if people miscall the head of a house how much more those who serve him! So if the world persecutes me it will also persecute you. On the other hand, if it obeys my teaching, it will obey yours also. If I had not come and told it the truth and done the works I have done it would not have been conscious of sin, but now that it has both seen me and heard the truth it will have no excuse for its sin, and so will hate me and hating me will hate my Father."

The conversation had taken a turn which again

damped their spirits. Jesus noticed their air of depression, and said in the most tender and consolatory way:

"You are sorrowful because I have spoken in the way I have done. But let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Trust also in me. In my Father's universe there are many stages, many resting places—if it were not so I should have told you—and I am going to make ready for you that you may continue there in my love."

"Lord," said Thomas who liked to have things made plain to his unimaginative mind, "we do not know where you are going, and how therefore can we know the way?"

"Why, Thomas, *I* am the Way, the Truth and the Life; no one comes to the Father and the Father's house save through me; if you know me you know the Father."

"Lord," put in Philip, "show us the Father and we will be satisfied."

Jesus turned to him in surprise. "Philip! have I been so long with you and you do not know me yet? He who has seen me has seen the Father. Why, therefore, do you say 'Show us the Father?' Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words I speak are not mine but His and the works I have done are His. Either believe me when I say 'I am in the Father and the Father in me' or believe for the sake of the works I have done. Remember, he that believes on me will be able to do what I have done; ay, more than I have done, for I go to the Father; and whatever you ask in my name will be granted. . . . A little while and you will see me no more, and again a little while and you will see me."

The mysterious words, repeated now with such emphasis, perplexed the disciples, who began whispering among themselves and looked as if they would like to question Him further.

"You are wondering what I mean?" He said. "Have I not spoken plainly enough? I will be killed and you will weep and lament, though the world will rejoice, but your sorrow will be turned into joy. It will be a time of sharp trial, as when a woman gives birth to a child; but as she soon forgets her anguish in her joy, so your grief will vanish when you see me again; and none will be able to take your happiness from you. I have often had to speak to you in proverb and parable, but now I can speak plainly of the Father. I came from Him into the world and I am now leaving the world and going back to Him."

"Teacher, you do speak plainly; now we believe that you came from God and know all things."

"Do you now believe? I tell you that the hour has arrived when you will all scatter, each man going his own way, and will leave me alone. And yet," He added in a tone of infinite content, "I am not alone because the Father is with me."

He rose.

"I have told you all these things that you may find peace in knowing them. There is much more I should have liked to say to you but you cannot bear it now. However, when the Spirit of Truth comes He will guide you into all truth, for there is nothing that is unknown which will not be revealed, or hidden which will not be uncovered."

He folded His hands and uplifted His eyes, and it seemed to the disciples that His spirit was withdrawing itself into some inner sanctuary; listening in awe

they heard Him pray as simply and naturally as one speaks to a kind and understanding parent:

"Father, the hour is come; I have accomplished the work which Thou gavest me to do. Oh, Father, glorify me. Thou gavest me authority over all flesh that I should give those who believe on me eternal life. This is life eternal that they know Thee, the only true God, and me whom Thou hast sent. I revealed Thee unto the men whom Thou gavest me out of the world and they have kept Thy word. They know of a truth now that I came from Thee and believe that Thou didst send me. I pray for them therefore for they are Thine and I am glorified in them. I shall be no more in the world, but they will be, and I come to Thee asking Thee to keep them. While I was with them I kept them and guarded them and only one has perished. I have given them Thy word and as Thou didst send me into the world so I send them and pray, not that Thou shouldest take them from it, but that Thou shouldest keep them from evil. They are not of the world even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Thy truth. Not only for them do I pray, but for all who believe on me through their teaching that they may all be one and be perfected in Thee. Father, all whom Thou hast given me I would that they may be with me and see my glory, and the love which Thou gavest me even before the foundation of the world."

The disciples were strung up to tense exaltation by this solemn intercession: they felt in the presence of the Almighty; their hearts were bowed down in reverence and humility and wonder; and when Jesus finished they could do nothing but keep silent and still. Then softly one began to sing and the others joined in. It was one of the Temple psalms and expressed their thoughts,

while the singing of it relieved the pressure of their emotion.

"Oh praise the Lord all the nations, praise Him all the people, for His merciful kindness is great towards us: the truth of the Lord endureth for ever. . . . The stone which the builders rejected is become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing: it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord has made: we will rejoice and be glad in it. . . . God is the Lord who has shown us light. Oh give thanks unto the Lord, for His mercy endureth for ever."

When it had ended the feelings of all were subdued and calmed and their eyes were turned expectantly to the Master.

"Come," He said, "let us go hence."

MIDNIGHT IN GETHSEMANE

They passed out into the streets which lay partly in clear moonlight, partly in black shadow; the traffic had ebbed but a number of citizens and pilgrims were still abroad in connection with the passover preparations. As they emerged a cloaked figure, standing unseen, stifled an exclamation of annoyance. It was Judas. He had proceeded to the palace of the High Priest and informed him of the whereabouts of Jesus and urged him to act quickly. But Caiaphas had to be careful in his procedure. He was aiming at the death of Jesus, but the Jewish authorities had no power to inflict the extreme penalty. He would have to secure the co-operation of the Roman Procurator and obtain a draft of soldiers from the garrison to effect the arrest. That accomplished he would have to obtain sufficient evidence to justify the sentence they desired.

Being assured that the necessary forces would soon be furnished from the Castle of Antonia, Judas returned to the house to keep watch. When the little company walked down the street he followed them, keeping within the shadows cast by the buildings.

They left the city by the eastern gate, crossed the Kidron, whose rushing water, swollen by the early rains, made music in the stillness, and ascended the white road on Olivet until they reached the gate of an orchard that stood open. As they entered, the lingering fragrance from flowers now asleep gave them a friendly welcome; they moved on under the shade of the olive trees. . . .

The stealthy figure that had been dogging them at a safe distance turned and ran swiftly back to the city and found a detachment of Roman soldiery under an officer, with Temple police, and servants of the High Priest, on the point of leaving.

"You are too late," he cried breathlessly. "Jesus has left the upper-room and gone to Olivet. He is in the garden of Gethsemane. I saw Him enter. It is a favourite resort of His and you will easily capture Him there. Come quickly."

"How shall we know Him?" asked the commander.

"The man you see me going up to and saluting will be Jesus. But He is possessed of strange power. Take care and secure Him well."

"We shall see to that," replied the officer with a rude laugh. . . .

Near the oil-press Jesus said to His disciples:

"Sit here while I go yonder and pray."

But feeling the need of human company and support

He asked His three most intimate companions, Peter, John and James, to come with Him. They went further up into the deeper shadows. In the dim light the three disciples saw that His face, hitherto so serene, had become pale and troubled. Conscious of their distress He said:

"My soul is indeed exceedingly sorrowful even unto death. . . . Remain here and watch."

He went forward a little and knelt in the attitude of prayer.

It was midnight. Perfect stillness in the garden; the leaves motionless as if carved in ebony; moonlight and shadow interlaced in intricate tracery. Outside, the wide landscape ghostly white; the city gleaming across the valley; a light shining here and there. Peace solemn and dream-like and a world asleep.

They heard His voice in an agony of supplication.

"Oh, my Father, all things are possible to Thee; if Thou be willing, grant that this cup may pass from me: nevertheless not my will but Thine be done."

They did not understand the implication of the words, nor when reflecting on them afterwards did they ever realise their full meaning. How could they? They had not the spiritual vision of Jesus, nor could they experience what He felt.

It was not the personal impact of the coming assault, the mere physical humiliation and suffering He was to endure, which overcame Him; that to Him was negligible. It was not the dread of death; for in His eyes there was no death. It was the horror of the situation in its larger, Diviner aspects, the awful thought that the human soul could deliberately trample underfoot the love of God and quench the light of truth; could, quite sanely and judicially, reject and de-

stroy Him who had come to save it, to give it freedom, to release it from the tyranny of the priestly system which denied it direct access to its God. The vision before Him was of the black passions of humanity, malignant evil incarnate, delighting and triumphing in what was base and false and brutish. The appalling madness of it! It was before that dreadful prospect that He recoiled and in His infinite pity asked that men might for their own sake be prevented from making Him drink so bitter a cup of anguish.

So long did He remain in silent communion that the three, wearied with the strain of the night's emotion, became drowsy and at last fell asleep. When Jesus, seeking their fellowship, returned He roused Peter who saw great drops glistening on His brow.

"Peter! Sleeping! Could you not watch one short hour?"

"Teacher," was the apologetic reply, "our eyes were heavy."

He thought compassionately on the pitiful weakness of human nature:

"The spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak: nevertheless this is a time to watch and pray."

He moved off and again His voice was heard repeating His former prayer:

"Oh, my Father, if this cup cannot pass except I drink it then Thy will be done."

"Thy will be done." It came to them that He trusted His father so implicitly that He would allow Himself to be roughly handled in the belief that some deep, Divine purpose lay behind it.

The minutes passed and again the disciples gave way to sleep, and again He came and wakened them and left them shamefaced like children. When He returned a third time they were awake but heavy-eyed.

"Sleep on now," He said quietly, "and take your rest."

He sat down beside them. His face was composed and rested-looking and the peace of God was upon it. The worst was over. Nothing mattered now after this crucifixion of His soul. . . .

Through the calm of the night came the faint sound of far-off voices, which developed into a low, menacing murmur, and then they heard the confused tramping of a body of men.

"Arise," said Jesus, "the hour has come; I am being delivered into the hands of evil men. He who betrayed me is here. Let us go and meet them."

Through the spaces of the trees they saw the gleam of torches and lanterns, and a compact body of soldiery appeared, driving before them the other disciples who had been left near the gate. Behind came a scrambling mob of priests, police and servants.

All halted when they saw a white figure advancing out of the gloom.

"Whom do you seek?" asked Jesus, His voice thrilling flute-like through the sudden stillness.

"Jesus the Nazarene," replied the officer in charge.

"I am He."

He stepped forward with an air so fearless and so suggestive of conscious power that they involuntarily fell back and looked enquiringly at Judas. He moved forward saying aggressively, "Hail, Rabbi," and kissed Him on the cheek.

"Ah, Judas," said Jesus, "do you betray the Son of Man with a kiss? . . . Well, do that for which you have come."

But the soldiers showed no disposition to act. Jesus asked again:

"Whom is it you seek?"

"Jesus of Nazareth."

"I tell you I am He. If therefore you want me only, let these my disciples go their way."

"He is the man we want—arrest Him!" cried one whom John recognised as Malchus, a servant of the High Priest, and, thus urged, the soldiers advanced.

"Lord!" exclaimed the disciples excitedly, "shall we defend you?"

At the words Peter impetuously drew his sword and struck at Malchus who, partially avoiding the blow, was wounded in the right ear.

"Peter!" said Jesus, "sheathe your sword. Those who use the sword are those who perish by the sword. The cup which my Father has given me to drink shall I not drink it? . . . Permit me."

Stepping forward He touched the man's ear and it was healed.

He addressed the group of Temple officers:

"So you have come out with swords and clubs to seize me as if I were a felon? Did not I sit daily in the Temple teaching and you did not arrest me? . . . But this is your little hour of triumph—the triumph of the powers of darkness."

"Seize Him!" the Roman officer cried, and the soldiers gripped hold of Him roughly and bound His arms behind.

When the disciples saw Him a prisoner and helpless, and searching looks being directed to them, they fell into a panic, backed into the shadows, and vanished, and Jesus was left alone with the mob.

They led Him into the roadway where a sudden altercation created a momentary diversion. A watcher from the building connected with the oil-press had been aroused by the noise and glare, and throwing a loose wrap about him had joined the throng. He knew

Jesus, was indeed a disciple, and so indignant was he at what he saw that he uttered strong words of remonstrance. The attendants turned upon him in anger and endeavoured to seize him, but when they grasped his wrap he threw it from him and fled in his night attire into the garden.

SENTENCE OF DEATH

As the procession made its way to the city two figures followed at a distance, taking advantage of the shadows that fell athwart the road but gradually drawing nearer. They were Peter and John, who had recovered their courage and were determined to see what was to be done with their Master.

At the eastern gate of the Temple which, like the others, was opened at midnight for the convenience of pilgrims—the officer asked:

"Whither do we take Him?"

"To the palace of the High Priest," was the reply, and they proceeded to the south-west corner of the city. The residence was built on the slope of the hill.

The two disciples, feeling safer in the narrow streets, were close at hand when the gate was reached. The porter, a woman, who was evidently on the watch, threw it open and all crowded into the porch and the lower courtyard. John was well known to the servants through his business dealings with the house, and boldly passed in with the others; but Peter, afraid on account of his attack on Malchus, hung back and was shut out.

Within a few minutes the Roman soldiers formally handed over their prisoner to the Temple guard and having accomplished their task marched out and back through the silent streets to their quarters.

John looked for Peter and not finding him returned to the gate and spoke to the woman:

"There is one outside who is a friend of mine; permit him to enter."

She opened the gate and John beckoned to a figure skulking in the shadows. Peter came forward and entered. The woman looked hard at him.

"Are you not one of the prisoner's disciples?" she asked suspiciously.

He was seized with momentary panic which paralysed his sense of loyalty:

"I am not," he blurted out.

Having made the plunge he went boldly forward through the porch into the court where shadow mingled with moonlight. A charcoal fire in a brazier in the centre was encircled by a number of Jewish officers and servants, for it was the coldest hour of the night and the air was sharp. Peter joined the group unobserved while John went into the audience chamber.

It was Annas, eager and vindictive, and a small number of the members of the Sanhedrin who were examining Jesus. Annas put searching questions to Him with the object of leading Him into some damaging admission, but Jesus had only scorn for his wily strategy.

"Why ask these things?" He said. "I have always taught openly both in the synagogue and in the Temple where Jews gather from every quarter. I have never said anything in secret. Ask, therefore, those who heard what I said. They know."

"Is that the way you answer the High Priest?" exclaimed an officer, giving Annas the title by which he was frequently called. He followed up the words with a blow, under which Jesus reeled though his face never lost its serenity nor His bearing its dignity. He turned to the man.

"If I speak ill you have the right to check me, but if I speak well why do you strike me?"

In the end Annas could make nothing of Him.

"Take Him to the quarters of Caiaphas," he ordered, "and keep Him fast bound until the Council meets at dawn. . . ."

In the court the men round the fire were talking and laughing. A palace maid, coming out, saw the face of Peter in the light of the flames: it awakened some recollection and aroused her curiosity and she went up to him. Suddenly she remembered:

"This man," she remarked to the guard, "is one of the followers of Jesus."

Peter, startled, looked round and said roughly:

"Woman, what are you talking about? I do not know the man."

Nevertheless he moved out of the circle of light into the darkness of the porch. Here the woman-doorkeeper who was sitting gossiping with some men noticed him and looked at him suspiciously.

Restless, excited and miserable, he moved back into the court, resolved, despite his fears, to know the fate of his Master. As he rejoined the group at the fire he heard a bustle above as if the proceedings in the Council chamber were over. At the same moment a servant, a relation of Malchus, came down the steps.

"Why," he said looking at Peter, "what is this fellow doing here? I saw him in the garden with the prisoner: he is one of His lot."

The guard scrutinised Peter again.

"I believe you are right. Besides, his dialect betrays him: he has the talk of a Galilean."

Peter was beside himself. He cursed and swore. "I tell you I know nothing of the man."

It was the hour before dawn, and as he shouted the

words a cock in the distance crew clear and shrill and there flashed into his mind the prophetic warning: "Before the cock crow you will deny me thrice." It had come true!

At the same moment he caught the eye of Jesus, who had emerged in custody and was moving down the steps. His look was significant and infinitely sad but without reproach, and it pierced Peter like a sword-thrust to his heart. A rush of tears blinded him: he turned and groped his way to the gate and stumbled out into the street sobbing bitterly.

For several hours Jesus remained at the mercy of His Jewish guards in the court of the High Priest's house. They were mean-minded fanatics, ignorant and brutal, and being wearied with their night's work and relaxed in discipline and self-control, they made Him the victim of their ennui, in ribald sport, baiting and tormenting Him as only bullies and cowards can do. They cursed Him, mocked Him, spat upon Him. Blindfolding Him they placed Him against the wall and striking Him one after the other they cried in derision: "Now, prophet, tell us who hit you? Come, let us hear how you can prophesy!" Harried, contemned, maltreated, He remained unmoved, unruffled, a serene, almost austere, expression on His worn countenance.

During these hours the members of the Sanhedrin had been urgently summoned and witnesses cited to appear. The procedure was irregular, but swift action was imperative if Jesus was to die before sunset, ere the people had had time to concert measures in opposition and ere the passover began. When the Council met there was a full attendance of members. Caiaphas presided.

Not a shred of incriminating evidence was adduced

against the prisoner until one came who declared he had heard Him refer disparagingly to the Temple.

"What did He say?" asked Caiaphas.

" 'I will destroy this Temple made with hands and in three days I will build another not made with hands.' "

The Council was puzzled. What did it mean? Was it a threat against their Holy Sanctuary?

Another witness was pushed forward. He, too, had heard the statement.

"Repeat it," said Caiaphas.

" 'I am able to pull down the Sanctuary of God and after three days to build a new one.' "

A further discussion ensued but with no better agreement as to the real significance of the words.

Caiaphas stood up and addressed Jesus.

"You have heard what these witnesses testify—what did you mean when you said that?"

Jesus did not deign to reply. Caiaphas tried another device: suddenly he demanded:

"Are you the messiah? Answer!"

But Jesus was not to be surprised or rushed into a hasty declaration.

"If I tell you," He said simply, "you will not believe; and if *I* ask *you* whether I am you will not answer. . . . But," He added, "I will tell you this, that from this time forward the Son of Man will sit in power with God."

The statement was impersonal, but it gave the astute minds in the Council an opening which they were quick to seize.

"Are you then the Son of God?" they cried.

"So you say."

It was an ambiguous phrase, but even if He had given an unequivocal affirmation there would have been nothing to take exception to: it was no crime for a man

to proclaim himself a son of God or the messiah. But it was sufficient for His enemies, whose minds were already made up. Caiaphas pretended to be shocked: he lifted up a corner of his robe and tore it in two.

"He has spoken blasphemy!" he exclaimed. "What need have we of more evidence? You have heard Him yourselves. What is your verdict?"

"He deserves to die," was the general but not unanimous cry: a number dissented, opposing the haste displayed, the illegalities in the proceedings, and the unjust condemnation. Jesus noted with interest that the two who held out most strenuously were Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathæa. But these were overborne by the majority.

Sentence of death was solemnly pronounced.

A STRUGGLE OF WILLS

The Jews executed by stoning, but with the power of inflicting capital punishment no longer in their hands it was necessary to have the sentence revised, and, if sustained, carried out by the Roman governor. Pilate's headquarters were at Cæsarea, but during the great religious festivals he usually resided in what was Herod's palace at Jerusalem, in case of disorder; and it was a cause of satisfaction to the chief priests that he was now in the city and could order the execution at once.

To make the application more impressive and convincing the majority of the Council accompanied the guards, with Jesus bound in their midst, along to the palace, which shone, magnificent, in the clear morning light. They halted outside the spacious porticoes, for to enter the building would bring them into contact with leaven and "defile" them and render them unable to participate in the passover. They sent in a re-

quest to Pilate for an audience. Aware of their strange prejudices and not unaware of their errand, for his spies had been active, he came out to a paved porch where stood the judgment seat under a cupola.

"Why have you brought this man to me?" he asked; "of what do you accuse Him?"

"If He were not an evil-doer is it likely that we would have brought Him over to you?" they replied.

There was a touch of insolence in their tone which Pilate resented.

"Take Him away," he said angrily, "and judge Him according to your own law," and turned to go.

"We have done so," they cried, "but we have no power to put a man to death."

"Ah," he said, wheeling round, "a death sentence! What is the charge?"

"He is a political agitator; He has been forbidding us to give tribute to Cæsar; moreover He maintains that He is the messiah and our King!"

Pilate motioned to his own guard.

"Bring Him in."

Jesus was taken up the steps and into a small audience chamber, and here the procurator faced Him, eyeing Him curiously and noticing His indefinable air of distinction, His serenity, and the dark eyes that glowed with a strange light.

"Are you the King of the Jews?" he asked.

"Do you say this of yourself or have others told it to you about me?"

"Am I a Jew?" retorted Pilate scornfully. "Your own people, these priests, have delivered you to me. What have you done? Are you after a Kingdom?"

"My Kingdom is not of this world," Jesus replied; "if it were, my followers would have fought to prevent

my being taken by the Jews, but it is not of this world."

"So you are a King?" Pilate rejoined, looking with a kind of pitying derision on the prisoner.

"You are right: I am a King; for to this end I was born into the world, but in a different sense from that which you have in your mind. I came to bear witness to the truth, and all who love truth listen to me."

"What *is* truth?" said Pilate, unconsciously in one brief sentence summing up ages of human search and speculation.

Nevertheless he was impressed by the simple dignity of Jesus. Ordering Him back he appeared with Him again at the head of the steps.

"I can find no fault in this man," he announced; "certainly no crime that He has committed."

Instantly from below came a chorus of cries and accusations. Pilate turned to Jesus who was quietly regarding the fierce faces.

"You hear how many things they accuse you of and yet you say nothing!"

Still the same impassive attitude.

Into Pilate's look crept something like admiration. The priests saw it and became more vehement. They determined to play a bolder policy.

"He is stirring up sedition among the people both in Galilee and Judea."

"Ho!" cried Pilate, "is He a Galilean?"

"Yes. He is Jesus from Nazareth."

"Then," he replied with a look of satisfaction, "He comes under the jurisdiction of Herod—and Herod is in the city." To an officer beside him he said, "Take the prisoner to Herod the Tetrarch and say that I sent Him."

He had a double object in doing this; if any trouble arose out of the incident he would have no responsibility; while such an act of courtesy might restore those friendly relations with Herod which had been somewhat strained as a result of the slaughter of his Galilean subjects in the Temple.

Jesus was marched off to the quarters of Herod, the Council members and a rabble of attendants following in His wake. Herod was quickly on the scene; he was pleased not only with the compliment paid him by Pilate—which, as the latter had shrewdly anticipated, restored their friendship—but with the opportunity of interviewing the man who had hitherto eluded him. Knowing the sectarian spirit and petty jealousies of the Jews better than Pilate he was not greatly concerned with the accusation against Jesus; he was eager merely to satisfy his curiosity and hopeful of seeing some miracle performed by the renowned wonder-worker. To his frivolous questions Jesus answered never a word. He treated him as if unconscious of his presence; as if he were non-existent.

The chief priests were irritated at the trifling; they wished the matter ended, and impatiently they reiterated the charges, especially those relating to the alleged blasphemy and the kingly assumption which they knew Herod would appreciate more intelligently than Pilate. Herod was amused at the idea of this young Galilean villager aspiring to a throne. Bidding his guard bring out some old royal garments he ordered them to array Jesus in them. Pale, worn and exhausted though He was He looked more princely in these than Herod in his brilliant purple. So calm and dignified and noble was His appearance that Herod was stung with a sense of inferiority so that he mocked Him and set his soldiers on to humiliate Him. But

Jesus continued to bear an air of remote detachment and an expression of utter tranquillity. A different man from John! As the remembrance of that martyr's ghastly fate came to Herod he shivered. No, he would not take the responsibility of another prophet's death.

"Take Him back. Tell Pilate I can make nothing of Him; He does not seem to have done anything criminal." . . .

When Pilate saw the gorgeously arrayed figure he laughed loudly, but he caught sight of a quiet face amidst the blaze of colour and two steadfast eyes regarding him, and paused in his mirth, and thoughtfully summoned the Jewish leaders. Sitting on the judgment seat he spoke to them in a tone of decision:

"You brought this man and charged Him with a political offence—you say He has been corrupting the loyalty of the people. I have examined Him as to that, and so has Herod, and neither of us has found the charge proved. I order, therefore, that He be flogged and then set free."

A clamour of angry cries, of baffled rage, and threats of appeal to Cæsar, greeted the declaration. Pilate, unheeding, rose to go.

Suddenly there swarmed into the courtyard a crowd of the populace, largely composed of the lower class, who advanced towards the Palace. Pilate, hearing the noise, turned, frowned, and asked haughtily:

"What now? What is this?"

A number of men detached themselves and approached.

"We are carrying out our custom. It is your privilege at this time to release a prisoner to us. We claim our right."

"It is true," remarked Pilate recalling the passover

practice. He re-seated himself. A happy idea flashed into his mind. Here was a better way to release Jesus! But he would play with the situation and tantalise and humble the arrogant priesthood. There was in prison closely confined a notorious agitator who had headed a riot in the city and had been guilty of murder.

"Surely I will follow the custom," he said heartily. "Here is Jesus, your so-called messiah, whom you know and admire; and there in the prison is Barabbas, a desperate character—Barabbas or Jesus?"

He had no doubt whom they would choose. Jesus was clearly the victim of ecclesiastical jealousy and tyranny, and many of the common people had, he knew, no great love for those set in religious authority over them. They would choose Jesus. But he overlooked the mortal fear which the priests were able to inspire. These spiritual police darted in amongst them, inciting them, and ordering them to ask for Barabbas and to demand the death of Jesus. At the same time a diversion occurred in the porch. Out of the palace came a servant and gave Pilate a message to which he listened attentively. It was from his wife:

"Have nothing to do with this good man. Do not sacrifice Him. I have had a terrible dream because of Him and am afraid."

Without further parley Pilate spoke in the formal manner of pronouncing judgment:

"I release to you Jesus, who is called the messiah."

Left to itself the crowd would have applauded the decision, but suborned by the priests it shifted its ground, as crowds quickly do.

"No! Away with this man and give us Barabbas."

"What then shall I do to Jesus whom you call King of the Jews?"

"Let Him be crucified!"

Crucifixion! To be stretched and nailed on wooden beams was the most ignominious form of execution; the Romans reserved it for slaves and provincials; a cruel death, one of the cruellest the devilish ingenuity of man had devised; it gathered up into some lingering hours the most poignant suffering which human mind and body could endure. The Jews regarded it with horror; how often it had marked the end of lost causes in their fight for freedom! And their own Law forbade it. Yet here they were asking for it for one of themselves.

"Why!" exclaimed Pilate astonished at their violence, "what evil has He done you? I tell you I have found no cause of offence in Him."

Again came the terrible cry, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!"

"I will release Barabbas to you," he said petulantly.

Re-entering the Palace he bade his soldiers take the prisoner to the barracks, scourge Him, and bring Him back. They made the most of their chance. As Romans they disliked and despised the Jews and had no patience with their queer ideas. Jesus was, in their eyes, merely a religious enthusiast with a mad delusion about a throne. They stripped Him of the finery with which Herod had decked Him, and flogged Him with the dreadful Roman whipping instrument made of leather thongs weighted with pieces of lead. . . .

They raised Him up and robed Him in a purple cloak, the insignia of imperial honour, and pressed into place on His brow a rude crown of thorns fashioned out of a prickly shrub. The blood sprang from the wounds it made and trickled down His face. In this guise they led Him back to the Palace, made Him stand in a conspicuous position against the portico, and placed a cane in His right hand. Ostentatiously they

began to act as if He were a monarch. The Jewish leaders and their followers stood by in helpless anger at what they considered an insult to them.

"Hail, King of the Jews!" His tormentors cried in mockery, kneeling and pretending to worship Him. Then in contempt they struck Him, and one seizing the cane smote Him a blow on the head, while others spat upon Him.

Upon this devil-play the Jews looked with impotent fury. When Pilate appeared they were beside themselves with rage.

The procurator stared down at Jesus in His new garb; He was leaning for support against the wall; His face, deadly pale, was streaked with blood. In Pilate's half-smile there was a touch of pity as well as contempt.

"Behold the man!" he said.

Again the roar of the mob: "To the cross! To the cross!"

Pilate turned in a gust of passion.

"Take Him yourselves and crucify Him!"

The chief priests answered him.

"We have a law and by that law He ought to die since He has made Himself out to be the Son of God, which is blasphemy."

Pilate gazed at Jesus long and thoughtfully; he was a Roman, and like many cultured Romans was not free from superstition, and the wonderful bearing and fortitude of the prisoner had impressed him more than he cared to acknowledge; he felt himself in the presence of something he did not understand. Once more he commanded that Jesus should be taken into the Palace; and in the audience chamber spoke to Him earnestly.

"Tell me in truth who you are and whence you come."

Jesus knew what was working in his mind; a fear that, after all, his prisoner might be more than man and possess Divine authority. But that had no connection with his judicial duty, which was to release Him. He remained silent.

"You refuse to answer *me?* Do you not know that I have the power to release you or to crucify you as I will?"

"You would have no power over me if it were not the will of my Father that this should be. I do not blame you so much as Caiaphas and those who handed me over to you."

This singular assurance and self-possession awed Pilate, who determined to set Him free. On returning to the portico he intimated this as his final decision. The subtle brains of the Jewish leaders had anticipated such a verdict and prepared for it. They made their last move.

"If," cried their principal mouthpiece in a clear deliberate voice, "you release this man you are no friend of Cæsar. Every man who aims at kingship is a rebel and a foe of Cæsar."

Pilate winced at the ominous words and flushed angrily. He was only a procurator, a personal agent and servant of the Emperor, accountable to him direct, and dependent on his favour. He held his power by the most fragile of all threads, the whim of an autocrat. An innuendo, a complaint, in the ear of the Emperor, and he might be dismissed and ruined for life. There was nothing that he dreaded more than a reference or appeal to Imperial Rome—*that* he would not face for the sake of an obscure prophet, who in his eyes had no higher political status than a slave.

He sat down again on the judgment seat and they

knew that they had won. But he played further with them in bitter disdain.

"So this is your King!"

"Away with Him! Crucify Him!" came the monotonous chant of the mob.

"Shall I, then, crucify your King?" he said maliciously.

"We have no King but Cæsar!" shouted the chief priests, throwing away in a moment of madness that ideal of liberty which the race cherished so passionately.

Pilate, shrugging his shoulders, called for a basin of water in which he washed his hands before the assembly.

"I am innocent of the blood of this holy man," he told them. "See you to it."

And with one accord they yelled:

"His blood be upon us and on our children"—a self-imposed curse which, they little knew, would work itself out in agonising misery through countless generations.

GOLGOTHA

Jesus was led back to the barracks; the purple robe was torn off and His own white garments put on. One of the rough timber crosses kept for crucifixion was dragged out. Round His neck was hung a board sent from the Castle on which Pilate, with a last fling at the Jews, had caused to be written in large letters, in Latin, Greek and Hebrew, the words:

JESUS
THE KING OF THE JEWS

When the chief priests saw the inscription they were incensed and hastily made their way to the Palace and demanded to see Pilate.

"What now?" said he, coming out, frowning and impatient.

"You should have written not 'The King of the Jews,' but that He claimed to be King of the Jews."

Pilate, losing self-control, burst out:

"What I have written I have written," and turned and left them.

When they returned they found that Pilate had ordered two of the minor prisoners concerned in the insurrection and under sentence of death to be crucified along with Jesus.

A gruff order from the centurion in command, emphasised by a stroke from the flat of a sword, made Jesus bend down and lift the cross. His strength was not equal to the task of bearing it entire, and shouldering the end of it He began dragging it along. The soldiers surrounded Him and the rulers and attendants and onlookers formed into a procession and so they emerged into the streets of the city.

The news of the arrest had spread, and a strained, silent crowd awaited them wondering what had happened, what the charge had been to ensure so swift a condemnation and sentence, and at a loss how to act. The disciples and their friends in the city and Bethany were there gazing with grief and horror on the bowed figure of their loved Master and scarce able to restrain themselves as the soldiers goaded Him down the steep and narrow way. They watched Him becoming more and more exhausted and faint and sinking lower beneath His burden until, on issuing from the northern or Damascus gate, He stumbled and fell, unable to go further.

The centurion looked round for some one to impress into the degrading service of carrying the cross, but was faced with a sullen, defiant crowd. A curious, expectant silence prevailed, broken only by the sobbing of the women of the city. In a sturdy figure advancing towards the gate he recognised a peasant and called him up.

"Who are you and where do you come from?"

"I am Simon of Cyrene," he said.

"Cyrene in North Africa—a stranger. That is well. Come, lift this cross and carry it."

He demurred, but the soldiers seized him roughly and laid the cross on his shoulders.

Jesus rose and straightened Himself wearily and a fresh outburst of weeping and wailing broke from the crowd. Suddenly His clear, pure voice rang out, startling the guard, and thrilling every listener:

"Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me but for yourselves and your children. For the days are coming when you will wish you had never borne children and never nourished them. You will cry to the hills then to fall upon you and cover you. . . ."

The centurion sternly ordered Him to move on and, half-pushed, half-led, He followed the bearer of the cross, who was impelled forward at the point of the sword. They ascended a slight slope to the common place of execution, a low rounded eminence to the right of the gate and not far from the walls, called Golgotha, from its resemblance to a skull.

Four soldiers dug the holes for the three crosses and then stripped Jesus of His clothes and flung them aside in a heap. Before stretching Him on the beams they offered Him, according to custom, a narcotic, wine mingled with gall, to deaden the pain. He sipped it and handed it back—He would not stupefy Himself

or ease His suffering—the cup which His Father had given Him to drink would He not drink it to the full?

They laid Him down on the cross, spread out His arms, and drove nails through the hands deep into the wood. His feet they treated in the same way. The inscription they fastened above His head. Then they raised the cross, planted it into the centre hole, and wedged it firm. The two malefactors were similarly hung, one on His right and the other on His left.

The people below in the roadway and round the base of the hill watched the operation with straining eyes. It was still early, about nine o'clock, and the fragrant freshness of the morning lingered. Sunlight, warm and clear: on the landscape a soft wind breathing: birds singing in the olive groves. Presently they saw the three dark crosses standing against the brilliant blue of the sky and in the centre the figure of Jesus clad in loin cloth and with a white tablet above His drooping head. A sound that was half-sob, half-sigh, ran over the assemblage. Women cried quietly: men stood staring, silent, bitter, disconsolate.

It was a black and terrible hour. Their souls were bewildered, their faith shaken. The new Kingdom of life and light and progress had seemed so near! Had they been deceived? Had it been a glorious but evanescent dream?

Their task completed, the soldiers turned their attention to the clothes of Jesus which were their perquisite. Of fine cloth and beautifully wrought, they were divided into four equal portions between them, but the tunic, which was like that of the High Priest, woven without seam from neck to hem, they thought it a pity to rend. "Let us cast lots for it," they suggested. This they did by means of their dice. Then

they settled down to guard the cross in case of any attempt at rescue.

The public were now allowed up the hill and many came, some urged by morbid curiosity, others by love for Jesus—amongst these the sorrowful figure of John, who lingered near his Master—and groups of His enemies who could not leave Him alone even in His hours of agony and helplessness. The chief priests and their satellites called up to Him jeeringly:

"Ho! you who boasted that you could destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself. If you are the Son of God, the messiah, the King of Israel, come down from the cross. Then we will believe you!"

He gazed down with a look of infinite compassion.

"Ay," cried one, "He saved others, Himself He cannot save."

"The King of the Jews! And He cannot save Himself from His subjects!"

His voice, calm and clear and full of Divine pity, fell upon them:

"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

The words thrilled one of the criminals at His side who knew something of the prophet and His message. Surely such a man was of God! Hearing the other criminal echoing half-consciously in his pain the taunts of the Jews, "Yes, if you are the messiah, save yourself and us," he cried out to him:

"Do you not fear God, seeing you are in the same position as He is? We are justly punished and are receiving the reward we merited, but this man has done nothing wrong. . . . Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom."

Softly the answer came back.

"To-day you will be with me in the Kingdom of the blessed."

John went down to a number of women standing at the foot of the hill—Mary, the mother of Jesus, Salome, Mary, wife of Cleopas and mother of James, the second disciple of that name, and Mary of Magdala. Taking courage at his word they walked slowly up, pausing occasionally that the guard might become familiarised with their presence. On reaching the cross they stood weeping and gazing sadly at the emaciated form and drooping head of their beloved Master.

Jesus opened His eyes and saw them. His face lit up with a wonderful light, and with tender solicitude for His mother he said with an effort:

"Mother . . . see . . . your son."

Then looking at John he continued:

"See . . . your mother."

John understood. He bowed his head in assent and moved towards Mary and stood beside her as if to proclaim his new relationship of guardian. She was thenceforward to be as his mother and the inmate of his home.

Even nature seemed to become conscious of the infamy of men and to register its protest. A change came slowly over the face of the sky: its brilliancy was dimmed, the sun shone sombrely through a blood-like haze, the atmosphere grew cool and spectral as it does during an eclipse, a strange stillness fell upon the wide land and the city streets. Men's minds became sober and uneasy.

As the bodily form of Jesus grew weaker and His vital energies lessened, the delicate mechanism of the mind also suffered from the strain and He became delirious. Fragmentary passages from the old sacred lit-

erature fell from His lips. One verse of the psalms floating into His memory was repeated in His native Aramaic in an anguished voice:

"My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

Some of those standing near hearing the words *"Eloi, Eloi,"* mistook them for "Elijah."

"He is calling on Elijah," they said.

Taking a sponge one of the soldiers dipped it in the sour wine which was their beverage on duty and sticking it on the end of a stalk torn from a plant thrust it up to His lips.

"Let Him be," shouted a callous bystander. "Let us see whether Elijah will come and save Him."

Jesus imbibed the moisture. It rallied His ebbing strength, His mind cleared, and in a last effort He cried in a serene, triumphant voice:

"It is finished. Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit."

His head fell upon His breast: the mortal part of Him was dead.

Uneasy nature reacted convulsively to the shock of that supreme moment: the earth rocked and Jerusalem was shaken to its foundations. And in the Temple the florid veil of the Holy of Holies was rent from top to bottom. Significant symbol! The veil of formal ceremonialism which had obscured the Truth was rent aside. Jesus had revealed God.

On Golgotha the people, unnerved and awed, began to ask themselves if this man was not after all a supernatural being. Even the rough centurion, who was greatly afraid, confessed that he believed Him to have been a good man, a real "son of God." And not a few left the scene and entered the city beating their breasts in token of their conviction that a genuine

prophet had been wrongly condemned and unjustly punished.

The Jewish leaders returned in a different mood. They had killed the Spirit of Truth, Goodness, Love, Progress, but this did not disturb them: they were only anxious about preserving the integrity of the ceremonial law which enjoined that no dead body on a tree should hang overnight. Next day also was the Sabbath and the Sabbath in passover week, one therefore of special sanctity. To the Palace they proceeded with a request that the bodies should be taken down before six o'clock. Pilate agreed, and as crucified men often lingered for days he sent an order to the soldiers to dispatch the three by breaking their legs. With a heavy mallet the men performed the act on the two criminals, but when they approached Jesus they found that He was lifeless. To make certain one of them pierced His side with a spear. This was the finishing stroke to their work and they returned to barracks.

Meanwhile another application was made to Pilate, who began to think he would never be done with the business. On this occasion he was surprised to find no less a person than Joseph of Arimathæa in the audience chamber: he knew him as one of the principal members of the Sanhedrin, a wealthy man, and greatly respected in the city. What he did not know was that he was at heart a disciple of Jesus and a believer in that spiritual kingdom which He preached. He was more courageous now than when Jesus was alive.

"I crave your permission to have the body of Jesus," he said.

"You, Joseph!"

"Yes. I admire the man and wish to save His body from dishonour. I will take it away and place it in my own tomb."

"But He cannot be dead yet. I have just issued orders that He be dispatched."

"He is dead."

"So soon? I must verify this."

He sent for the centurion who corroborated the statement, and he then granted the official permit. Joseph hurried off to inform Nicodemus, his fellow councillor, whom he knew to be also a secret disciple. Both went in search of the material required for burial, Joseph buying the finest and costliest linen, Nicodemus a hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes, and then proceeded to Golgotha where they found the faithful band of women disciples still lingering: all except His mother who, overcome with the horror of the event and suffering as if a sword had pierced her heart—ah, how she remembered that prophecy of the old man in the Temple!—had accompanied John to his quarters in the city.

Reverently taking down His dear body they wrapped it temporarily in strips of the linen, with the spices between, and followed by the sad group of women, carried it down the hill and round to a spot where, in the limestone rock, a new tomb was hewn. It was Joseph's, prepared to be his own resting place. In it they laid Jesus and rolled the great circular stone in front of the entrance. Thus two members of the ecclesiastical court which had hounded Him to death took loving care of His body and honoured His character and message when He was no longer alive.

The women, seeing that all was in order, returned to the city, and, obedient to the custom in which they had been bred, rested from sunset, to sunset next day.

THE SPIRITUAL JESUS

As soon as the Sabbath was over they busied themselves procuring the aromatic oils and spices needed for the burial. Impatiently they waited for the morning. As soon as the first gleams of light shot athwart the sky Mary of Magdala, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and Salome, set out for Golgotha. It was not until they were near the spot that they began to wonder who would roll away the stone for them.

"Look!" exclaimed one, "the tomb is already open. Some one has been before us!"

They hastened forward, unafraid, expecting to see some of their friends. On entering the tomb they saw that it was empty. The linen bands were lying on the ground, and near them the head napkin neatly rolled up. They stood in amazement, fear gripping their hearts. Had the body been stolen by His enemies and subjected to dishonour?—a terrible thought.

Their first impulse was to inform the disciples, and in feverish haste they made for the city. Fear and love sent Mary of Magdala flying ahead of the others. Alone and breathless she reached the house where John and Peter lived. They heard her agonised cry:

"They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb and we know not where they have laid Him!"

Both stood for a moment incredulous. Then a fierce wrath flamed into their hearts, and with a common impulse they dashed out of the house into the streets. John, fleet of foot, outdistanced Peter, and reached the tomb first. At the entrance he suddenly pulled up and stooping down looked in and saw the cereclothes lying clean and orderly. Half afraid he remained outside until he was joined by Peter, who boldly went down and entered and examined the tomb.

What had happened? After inspecting the vicinity they returned slowly to the city.

Mary of Magdala had followed them, and when she encountered the other women they all turned back, but she, all impatience, again hurried away in front. Peter and John had already gone. As she stood by the side of the empty tomb a wave of unhappiness, of dejection, of intense desolation, swept over her and she burst into tears and wept her misery out. Suddenly she thought she perceived a faint gleam of shining light within the tomb and stooping she peered in. To her amazement two radiant figures were sitting where the body of Jesus had lain. She heard a voice:

"Woman, why do you weep?"

Her sense of bereavement overcame her natural fear.

"Because," she said, "they have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid Him."

A movement as of some one near made her turn. Through the mist of her tears she saw a tall figure whom she supposed to be the gardener. A wild hope sprang into her mind.

"Sir, if *you* have borne Him hence tell me where you have laid Him and I will take Him away."

"Mary!"

Her hand went to her heart and she swung round. Only one voice could speak in that tone of affection, sympathy and compassion.

"My Teacher!" she cried, with glowing face, and kneeling began to worship Him.

"Not yet," He said gently, "for I am not yet ascended to my Father. Go now and tell the brethren that you have seen me."

After one long adoring look she turned and went swiftly out of the garden. Missing the others she con-

tinued to the city and found the disciples gathered together.

"I have seen the Lord!" she cried exultantly and they listened to her extraordinary story. . . .

When the other women came again to the tomb they also saw the two shining figures within and were frightened almost out of their wits: they shook and fell to the ground.

"Do not be afraid," they were told, "you are seeking Jesus the Nazarene who was crucified? He is not here: He has risen. See for yourselves. Go you also and inform the disciples and tell them that He is going to Galilee. There they too must go and there they will see Him."

They rose and fled. Unlike Mary of Magdala they lost their nerve at this sudden contact with the spiritual world, and when they found themselves at the house where they lodged they sat still in awe and wonder discussing the matter. Who would believe them if they told of their experience? It was not until Mary of Magdala appeared that their courage returned.

"I have told the brethren," she said, "and they will not believe. Come you also and bear me out."

They accompanied her to the house of the disciples who were sitting in deep anxiety and perplexity, and related what they had seen but were listened to with impatience. It was the talk of emotional, overwrought women: they were projecting their wishes into the objective region: they were imagining what they hoped might be. If Jesus had gone to heaven how could He come back? They imagined in the conventional way of the time that the spiritual world was at some immeasurably remote distance instead of being a state of existence that might be about them.

With the company were Cleopas from Emmaus, a

village some miles out of the city, and his wife, both devoted followers of Jesus. Having to return home that afternoon they left the others. On the way their minds were occupied with the exciting events of the day: they discussed them in all their aspects and speculated endlessly on their significance. A traveller, also from the city, made up to them, and walking near heard their comments.

"What is it," he asked courteously, "that you are debating so earnestly?"

They paused in their walk and regarded him with sad and forlorn gaze.

"You must be a stranger, and a solitary one, in the city if you have not heard of the things that have happened there."

"What things?"

"Why, this crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth. He was a great prophet, mighty in word and deed, but the chief priests and the councillors delivered Him up to Pilate and He has been executed. And we hoped that it was He who was to redeem our nation. It is three days since He died. Strange to say some women of our company went early to-day to His tomb and came back and told us that His body had disappeared and that they had seen a vision of angels who announced that He was alive! Two of our number went to the tomb and found that His body was indeed gone, but Jesus was nowhere to be seen. And we do not know what it means."

"Oh, dullards, how slow you are even to believe your own scriptures. Do you not remember how they state that your messiah would suffer at the hands of men?"

And as they continued their walk he quoted passages which referred to one who would save the people and die for them.

When they reached Emmaus the two disciples stopped at their door and the stranger, whom they took to be a rabbi, saluted them with a grave courtesy and would have gone on but they stayed him. The sun was setting and it was some distance to the next village.

"Stay with us," they said in the spirit of hospitality native to the East, "for the day is far spent, and it will soon be dark."

He acquiesced and went in with them. The woman bustled about preparing supper, and when the low table was spread they took their places, the stranger, as a rabbi, being accorded the couch at the head. He lifted the bread, broke it, asked a blessing, and handed each a piece. Something in the action and in his manner made them regard him closely. They started:

"It is the Lord!" they exclaimed.

They saw Him smile and felt it like a benediction. But as they gazed He was not there.

Astounded they began excitedly to recall every moment of the journey and everything He had said.

"No wonder our hearts burned within us while He talked!"

They felt they must return to Jerusalem to tell the others, and, late though it was, they set off, so filled with joy at the wonder of the experience that they never thought of danger.

They found a large body of disciples gathered secretly within closed doors, convinced now that Jesus was alive, for Peter had also seen Him, and this new testimony confirmed their belief.

Suddenly they heard a soft voice.

"Peace be to you."

Jesus was standing in their midst. They cried out,

thinking it was a spirit, and shrank away from Him in terror.

"Why are you afraid? Why do you doubt? See the prints in my hands. See my side. See my feet. A spirit has not flesh and bones as I have."

They continued to gaze at Him paralysed; they could not believe the evidence of their senses.

"Have you anything to eat?" He asked in His old natural tone.

The homely question broke the spell. Hastily they brought a piece of broiled fish which He ate before them. So commonplace an act completely restored their self-possession, and like delighted children they began to express their joy and love and devotion. He told them that as His Father had sent Him into the world to teach and heal, so He now sent them and gave them an assurance that God's spirit would be with them.

Two figures were absent from this meeting. Of one none spoke, though all felt the horror of his treachery and his fate. Judas was dead. After the betrayal he had suffered an overwhelming reaction; no one could have been in the company of Jesus for so long without having had his character radically affected, and after his fit of passion had passed, the good in his nature emerged and he was plunged into a slough of horror and remorse and bitterly repented his act. Seizing the wretched money he had earned he went to the Temple when the Council was sitting, burst into their presence, and cried:

"I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood!"

"What is that to us?" they retorted with a sneer. "It is your business."

Rushing out he threw the money into the treasury boxes and went to his quarters and hanged himself.

When the chief priests heard of the tragedy they took out the money. "It is the price of blood," they said; "we cannot use it for religious purposes."

At the next meeting of the Sanhedrin the matter was discussed and it was decided to spend it on the purchase of a field in which to bury strangers who died in the city. The ground so bought became known as the Field of Blood, a memorial of the mystery of a human heart. . . .

Thomas was the other absentee. When later he was informed about the appearance of Jesus his temperamental scepticism proved too strong for their united evidence; he was convinced that they had been the victims of an optical illusion.

"Except," he said emphatically, "I put my finger into the print of the nails and into the wound in His side I will not believe."

A week later the disciples met again in the same room within locked doors. Thomas was with them.

"Peace be to you."

It was Jesus. He looked at Thomas with the tender smile they all knew so well.

"Thomas, put your finger into my hands and into my side, and be not faithless but believing."

The gentle rebuke broke Thomas; he held out his hands in a gesture of appeal, and with a cry full of contrition and love:

"My Lord, and my God!"

"Ah! Thomas, you believe because you have seen me: happy are they who have not seen me and yet believe."

FAREWELL

Obedient to their instructions the disciples returned to Galilee. What the object of Jesus was in sending them there they did not know, but they had now absolute faith in His Divine leadership. He might wish them to rest and recuperate in security and peace—what more natural than that they should do so in their own district and among their own people? It was also the spot He loved best and there, if anywhere, He would prefer to meet them, and send them out to the work which they knew they were to carry on.

One night by the shore of the Lake a number of them, including Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, John and James, gathered, as they were wont to do, to discuss the mysterious events in which they had been involved. Uncertain of the future but full of confidence they were waiting for Jesus. Inaction, however, was foreign to Peter. He stretched himself.

"I am going out fishing," he said.

"We will go with you," said the others.

Securing the "good news" boat and the necessary tackle, they pushed out to the fishing grounds. All night they patiently cast their lines, but without success. In the pale light of the dawn they turned and made for the shore. On the beach stood a figure watching them, and over the quiet water came a hail:

"Lads, have you caught any fish?"

"No," they responded.

"Cast the net on the right side of the boat."

Something in the voice made John shade his eyes and seek to discern the stranger more clearly. Peter, only eager to act on the suggestion, promptly drew over the net and cast it as bidden. To the astonishment of all

it was rapidly filled with such a quantity of fish that they found it impossible to drag it in.

John looked again towards the solitary figure.

"Peter," he said in a low, excited voice, "it is the Lord."

Peter dropped the net and, rising, looked eagerly at the figure. In a moment he seized his coat, threw it round his body—for, as was the custom with fishermen at work, he wore only a loin-cloth—jumped into the shallow water, and waded ashore. The other disciples, unable to handle the heavy catch, rowed to the beach dragging the net behind them.

Peter reverently approached Jesus and was greeted with the homely words:

"Bring some of the fish you have taken."

He returned and assisted his comrades to land the fish, which for size and number they had never seen equalled.

When they came up to Jesus He was sitting beside a glowing fire of charcoal.

"Come and break your fast," He said in His old kindly tones, and timidly and hesitatingly they approached, none daring to speak. After broiling the fish He handed them each a portion along with some bread, and they ate.

"Peter," He asked, looking at him in the way He used to do, "do you love me more than the others?"

"Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."

Jesus looked up for a moment to the green slopes where flocks were browsing.

"Then feed my lambs."

There was silence for a time.

"Peter, do you love me?"

"Why, Lord, you know that I love you."

"Then shepherd my sheep," He said.

Again silence.

"Peter, do you love me?"

Peter was grieved at being asked a third time—was Jesus thinking of his three denials?

"Lord," he said humbly, "you know that I love you."

"Then feed my sheep. When you were young, Peter, you girded yourself and went whither you would; but when you become old another will lead you and take you where you do not wish to go."

After which enigmatic remark He said to all:

"Come, follow me."

They walked along the shore, Peter pondering over what had been said. Why had he been singled out? Catching sight of John behind he asked on the impulse of the moment:

"Lord, what will John do?"

"Do not trouble about John. Follow me yourself." . . .

When all their personal arrangements had been completed the disciples bade farewell to Galilee and returned to Jerusalem, where Jesus joined them in the room in which He had appeared to them and told them to keep together until they received their final baptism of power from God.

"Come," He said, for the last time, and led them out by the familiar road to Mount Olivet. They reached the summit and stood at the centre of a far-reaching landscape. East and west, north and south, every part was historic—the hills of Moab, the Jordan valley, the Dead Sea, the wilderness, Bethany, Bethlehem, Mount Hermon, the Holy City. But their eyes were fixed on their Master, a mysterious Figure, serene, majestic, grave, the incarnation of a love and

purity and power that seemed to make His countenance glisten and to aureole His head with a mystic light.

Suddenly He lifted up His hand; they bowed their heads; He blessed them; and when they looked again He was gone. . . .

They walked back to the city in a mood of exaltation and triumph. It was clear now that Jesus was not the messiah of their dreams and of popular expectations, and His mysterious reappearances and His farewell confirmed their belief in His real nature. He was Some One far higher than the messiah: His Kingdom was to be a spiritual one far more extensive and more powerful than any worldly empire. But they still entertained mistaken ideas; they looked, for instance, for His early return in the same manner as they had anticipated His earthly triumph.

He had devised no organisation for them to carry on the work He wished them to do; He left them only a clarified idea of God and a vision of a Better Way of Life. In His spirit and by His power they undertook their task with an enthusiasm and a courage which they had never displayed in His life-time, and through the sheer beauty and purity of their teaching won converts among Jews and pagans.

The spiritual conquest of the world had begun.

VI: WHAT CAME AFTER

Jesus destroyed the evil spirit of Judaism. His followers took it and clothed it in a new dress. He showed the world the Divine Way of Life. They converted it into dogmatic Christianity. Systems of belief and salvation with little or no relation to His real teaching were built up and imposed on the people, bringing throughout the centuries spiritual perplexity and misery to multitudes. The Jewish mode of thought and attitude still survive, and the conflict between the inertia of the conservative element in human nature and the soul of Jesus continues. But He still possesses the glamour of His old enchantment, and in quiet and silent ways, without observation, His Kingdom comes.

THE SOUL OF JESUS

Jesus brought to the world no solution of the mystery of life. He left the problem where it was. Men and women continued to be tormented by the burden of their lower tendencies and their ignorance, and oppressed by injustice and cruelty and suffering. These things He did not seek to explain, nor did He endeavour to put right by direct means what was wrong. That was not His mission. Men themselves were moulding the world, and its material destiny was, in a sense, in their hands. He did not, therefore, touch social or political or economic questions. What was evil in these was due to false views of life, and the way to alter them was to alter man's point of view. This was the only real method of progress.

For such a purpose no new structure of faith was required. Man's relation to God had always existed; the perfect system of love and law had been in operation since the beginning. The object of Jesus was to reveal it more clearly to men and women that they might act upon it; to make them see that to act upon it would solve all their ills. It was the true path and direction of activity which He pointed out, and how each day's requirements in it could be met with courage and joy and peace. He called it The Way. This idea of the right Way ran through all His teaching. It was the Way of salvation for which men had always been seeking. There was no need therefore to propose any new plan of salvation; the Way He taught led naturally to life, fuller life here and higher life hereafter. This was the "eternal" life craved for by the human heart—oneness with the Eternal.

Hence He dealt in no arid expositions of principles; He used no abstract terms; He drew on the conventional ideas and spoke in the ordinary speech of the day; His teaching was largely given in picture form. When accounts of His career came to be written they presented, not in ecclesiastical phraseology but in the unofficial language of the common people, what seemed a simple human story of love and service.

It was this apparent simplicity which misled the world; it seemed to savour of the simplicity of ignorance. His teaching, like the speech of children, was too direct and uncompromising; it applied too nakedly to the business of daily life; it was too innocently terrible in the demands it made upon the soul; it belonged to the sphere of impracticable idealism. Habituated to concrete schemes of salvation, the human mind desired one which could be, as it were, mechanically gripped and applied like a salve to its ills whenever

the need arose. It was not unworthy, this craving to put oneself right with God by cut-and-dried artificial means, but it sent the world blundering forward again on the wrong path.

The tendency began early. Difficulties had been created by Jewish converts who desired to graft certain of the old practices on to the new faith. This would have seriously crippled its power of appeal and expansion, for its strong point was freedom from the traditions of the past and its aim a world-wide missionary campaign. The emergency was dealt with chiefly by Paul, a contemporary of Jesus who had not come under His personal influence or read accounts of His ministry and teaching. He was college trained, intellectually brilliant, possessed intense energy and organising ability, but was a Jew of the Jews and a strict pharisee. At first a bitter opponent and persecutor of the disciples, a startling spiritual experience turned him into an ardent follower of the Galilean, a notable preacher, and an indefatigable missionary traveller. Very skilfully he argued the Jewish reactionaries out of their position and as skilfully commended Jesus to the cultured and cynical pagan mind.

But as he was fundamentally a Jewish theologian he retained many of the traditional views concerning human nature, propitiation, mediation and sacrifice, and these naturally affected the character of his thinking and preaching and the letters of counsel and admonition he wrote to the undisciplined groups of Christians in the various centres. Through his mind the knowledge he possessed of the pure white teaching of Jesus passed as through a prism and became many-coloured in its import. His arguments were appropriate for the time; his words and phrases conveyed some sort of meaning to the people whom he addressed; but as time

went on they became more and more like smoke-clouds which hung over the clear sweetness of his Master's teaching and obscured it from common view.

It was during the period of Paul's activity that the Way of Life, the expressive phrase of Jesus for man's spiritual pilgrimage, became known by a name which was Jewish. Pagans who often heard the disciples of the new faith speak of Jesus as the real messiah—Christos—the saviour of mankind, gave them, half in contempt, the title of "Christians," and this came into general use. The Way became "Christianity," and Jesus became "Christ," an official designation such as the world loves, which came to be more often applied to Him than His rightful personal name bestowed upon Him by His Father.

As time went on the ecclesiastical mind and the academic temperament felt, as often before, that a religion without a dogmatic backbone would neither be safe nor permanent. The position taken up was practically that the mission of Jesus was unfinished and that God raised up Paul to complete it by a revelation which was more important for the spiritual necessities of mankind. Mainly on his writings a system of theology was constructed which sought to explain in a technical way the purpose of God, why Jesus lived, why He died, and the legal conditions of salvation. It was a gospel which Jesus, the Master, had not preached, and which Paul, His servant, never meant to be a substitute.

Religion again became materialised and formalised. Metaphysical doctrines were formulated and creeds were imposed as authoritative and final. A ritual as elaborate in its pageantry as the Jewish was developed. Temporal as well as spiritual power was sought after. The priesthood became corrupt and venal. The people fell into idolatrous practices of a new type, such as

worship of saints and holy places and veneration of relics. There was much religion but no real religious sense. As the Jews had recognised God but misinterpreted His law, so Christians believed in Jesus but ignored His teaching. It was not surprising that "Christianity" failed to satisfy humanity or stem evil, or that it was defeated by Islam even in the country of its birth.

Nevertheless something fine and spiritual and universal had entered the world, making for goodness and the happiness of men and women. It was the Soul of Jesus, the Spirit of Truth. It belonged to no race and no land: it appealed alike to child and savage and philosopher. It was a personality as viewless as the air, a voice as wordless as music, an influence as impalpable as fragrance. It was a force which handled no sword and exercised no pressure, and left men and women to the freedom of their own will. It offered a religion independent of sect or church or ritual, a creed which was love, a worship which was selfless service, an ideal which was simplicity, humility, purity, kindness.

Browbeaten by the official custodians of religion, this unseen element broke through all barriers, eluded its keepers and pioneered the way to wider vision and truer knowledge. Obstructed, persecuted, excommunicated, it pursued its lonely way, hidden like leaven in the inner life of humanity, passing from land to land and penetrating to remotest regions, changing hearts and wills, and moving the timid and humble to incredible heroism and sacrifice.

It brought about moral and intellectual reactions and reforms, but the reformers seldom went further back than Paul, and the movements, resisted by the forces of conservatism and self-interest, resulted in the forma-

tion of organisations which, though simpler in structure, were still based on theological dogmas. Christendom became subdivided into irrelated sects separated by differences of belief and practice of secondary importance. The original significance, the radiant wonder, of the teaching of Jesus became smothered beneath a vast accumulation of dreary dogma, bitter polemic, and formal ceremonial. Even the wilderness and the solitary regions of the earth were transformed by the glories of dawn and sunset, but the pure light of heaven seldom played on that barren ecclesiastical waste.

Through all the turmoil of conflict and change, the clash of creeds, and the bitterness of controversy, the Soul of Jesus continued to draw spirits into contact with Himself and into the calm of spiritual peace—men and women in every sphere, learned and unlearned, of simple thought and lovely life, who kept the Divine light burning and gave to common existence its sweetness and savour. Gradually it liberated the human mind from the error of supposing that religion was a matter of doctrine and external observance. Slowly also it revolutionised men's ideas of nature and natural law and gave them some conception of the evolutionary processes and the beauty and wonder of the universe.

THE WORLD ON THE OLD PATH

The Christian world as a whole continues to travel on its broad and dusky highway, and does so as a matter of habit which has become second nature. To a large extent its thought is ignorant, insular and intolerant.

The dramatic fate of that Eastern race from which

its faith has come has had little significance or warning for it. The Jews persisted in relating their religion to a nation, a country, a city, a Temple, a sacrificial system. Their Temple was destroyed, their "holy" city was razed to the ground and other towns blotted out of existence and the knowledge of men, their country was reduced to the abomination of desolation, they as a race were scattered, to wander homeless through the world haunted by unfulfilled dreams. It was a lesson for all time that God and His truth cannot be localised or made the exclusive possession of a particular people, or school of theology.

Yet He is still thought of in much the same way as the Jews regarded Him, and worshipped by lifeless form in much the same spirit. His self-manifestation is confined to one epoch in His evolving world. He is shut up into a system of which Paul, who is looked upon as Moses, or David, was by the Jews, was the real if unwitting founder. Priests of many kinds still mediate between Him and the individual soul. Membership in the sects can only be secured by rites of initiation; those who are outside any organisation are considered spiritual pariahs although they may worship God in spirit and in truth.

Jesus, God's evangelist, is accepted as the Jewish messiah and called "Christ"; the Jewish legal code, prophecies and apocalyptic writings, are studied by many more than His teaching; He is indeed almost buried out of sight in a Bible which receives greater reverence than He does. The Jewish idea of sacrifice, transferred to Him, still colours the thought of multitudes. Most creeds lay the emphasis on His death, and not on His life and what He taught, though neither His death nor the cross came into His own

thought in the way in which they are now regarded in relation to the needs of the soul.

If the cross has any significance at all in human life it typifies that spirit of intolerance, jealousy, prejudice and cowardice which in a multitude of ways still crucifies His soul and re-enacts the tragedy of His death, and it constitutes an everlasting rebuke to that conservative attitude which to-day finds it as difficult to countenance spiritual progress and is as ready to reject truth as it did two thousand years ago. If Jesus were to appear now He would pass over the conventional line into a region of speech and action where He would incur the hot anger and censure of those with whose policies and interests He interfered.

The history of humanity forbids the belief that His conquest of the world will be speedy. The divisions and rivalries in the religious sphere, which are so out of harmony with the Divine order and impede the moral and spiritual development and unity of the race, have to be eliminated. The official, legal presentation of His life and message has to be disentangled from tradition and simplified and revitalised. It is claimed that the restraints of dogma are essential to keep the masses on right lines and safeguard society. But they are chains, not securities. They block rather than clear the path of progress and attainment. When a sectarian bias has been planted in the mind of a people it is almost impossible to uproot it; they were born into their faith and its customs and prejudices, and the process of enlightenment is exceedingly slow. A vast dead weight of apathy, superstition, tradition and bigotry has to be removed before the Soul of Jesus can have free play.

For long there has been a consciousness that things

are out of joint. The dissatisfaction and irritation to which this gives rise find expression in the charge that Christianity has failed. And so it has, for no system founded on any but the principles taught by Jesus can expect to succeed. The counter-charge is that Christianity has never been tried. It has been tried for nineteen centuries—and the world is as it is.

But the Way of Life has not failed. It has never failed wherever it has been tried. What Jesus has already accomplished in the face of the stupendous stupidity of humanity is the greatest of all His miracles.

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